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NATIONAL Ambassador

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Abia State To Strengthen Climate Governance

By Offor Okechukwu

A one-day stakeholder workshop on Rebundling Sovereignty Over Local Nature In Global Governance, organised by the Abia State NEWMAP-EIB, in collaboration with the University of St. Andrews United Kingdom, has ended in Umuahia, the state capital, with the state government reiterating its commitment to aligning its financial system with environmental priorities.

Declaring the workshop open which had in attendance participants from the nine states of the Niger Delta, the Abia Commissioner for Environment, Mr Philemon Ogbonna, disclosed that the present administration in the state has placed environmental sustainability, climate resilience, and responsible natural resources management at the centre of the state's developmental agenda and governance priorities.

The commissioner, who was represented by the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Environment MrIkechukwu Oriuwa noted that the partnership between Abia NEWMAP-EIB and the University of St. Andrews reflects the global co-operation needed to address environmental challenges that have local impacts and global significance.

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Otti Promises Full Entitlements For Workers Disengaged By Past Govts

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Abia State Governor, Dr Alex Otti, has assured workers disengaged from the state's public service by previous administrations that they will receive their full outstanding entitlements after verification.

Governor Otti gave the assurance recently, while addressing members of Ndi Imo in Abia during a civic reception held in his honour at Ogbonnaya Onu Polytechnic, Aba.

The governor said his administration had considered appeals for the reinstatement of workers disengaged between 2011 and 2012, but explained that many of those affected had become too old to return to active service.

He, therefore, directed that their outstanding entitlements be computed and paid after the necessary verification.

"I have also listened to a plea about recalling those who were disengaged a long time ago,

about 2011-2012. I had given that directive when Anambra people received me; it was not just for Anambra people, it was for everyone.

"The reality is that some of those people who were disengaged 15, 16, 17 years ago have become so old that they can no longer go back to their work. So what we are saying is that we will calculate their entire entitlements and pay them.

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L-R: Abia State Coordinator, National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), Alhaji Yanusa Tanimu and Gov Alex Otti of Abia State, as Abia Gov received a delegation of the New State Coordinator, National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), Mr. Yunusa Tanimu in his office recently..

MOUAU Suspends Registrar, Bursar As Governing Council Orders Probe Over Alleged Financial Irregularities -

By Our Reporter

The Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUAU), Abia State, has suspended its registrar and bursar as the institution's

Governing Council orders an administrative investigation into alleged financial and administrative irregularities.

The decision according to sources was taken at the university's 96th Statutory

Meeting held from June 29 to July 3, 2026, where the Governing Council constituted an administrative panel of Inquiry to investigate the implementation of council decisions and other

administrative matters between July 2024 and February 2026 and communicated by the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Ursula Ngozi Akanwa, at the 262nd regular meeting of the Senate.

The Council also directed that the registrar and the bursar proceed on leave at the convenience of the vice-chancellor to enable the panel conduct its assignment without interference.

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MOUAU Suspends Registrar, Bursar

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Although the Council, according to sources, did not publicly disclose the specific issues that informed the directive. Sources within the university, linked the development to concerns bordering on financial management, recruitment processes and other administrative decisions taken during the tenure of the immediate past Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Maduebibi Ofo Iwe.

The sources said that the latest development comes amid revelations contained in the report of the Auditor-General of the Federation, which flagged alleged financial infractions amounting to about N6.5 billion involving the institution between 2021 and 2022.

The audit report submitted to the National Assembly identified 32 instances of non-compliance, including questionable payments, procurement breaches and unremitted revenues.

According to the report, about N5.9 billion was allegedly involved in questionable payments arising from contracts awarded above approved thresholds, extra-budgetary expenditures, procurement violations, unapproved payments and projects reportedly not executed.

The university was also accused of failing to remit N578.9 million, representing 25 per cent of its Internally Generated Revenue (IGR), to the Federal Government's Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) as required by law.

Among the infractions highlighted were contracts worth over N2 billion allegedly awarded in violation of procurement laws, more than N1 billion in extra-budgetary spending, an alleged N44.18 million overpayment of severance allowance to a former Vice-Chancellor, N64 million in unapproved Christmas and Sallah gifts to staff, and N30.5 million paid for items and services allegedly not delivered.

The audit report also raised questions over the retention of official vehicles by former principal officers and alleged improper conversion of two official vehicles previously assigned to the current Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Ursula Ngozi Akanwa, while she served as Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

Other issues raised included contract splitting to avoid procurement thresholds, payment of N275 million through non-personal advances, N6.1 million spent on foreign trips without required approvals, N44.6 million in unauthorised salary arrears paid from IGR, and N45 million paid to a consultant without verifiable evidence of beneficiaries.

The auditor-general further cited ICT

projects allegedly executed without mandatory approval from the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), contracts awarded without competitive bidding, unrecovered cash advances of about N242 million, unsupported contract payments and unauthorised allowances outside the Integrated Personnel Payroll Information System (IPPS).

The report noted that the university management failed to provide responses to some audit queries seeking clarification on the identified infractions.

Meanwhile, the ongoing investigation has also brought renewed attention to allegations surrounding the administration of the immediate past Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Maduebibi Ofo Iwe.

Sources alleged that about N130 million was paid as severance benefits to the former vice-chancellor, a matter which they said formed part of the concerns before the Governing Council.

The sources also raised questions over recruitment conducted shortly before the end of his tenure, alleging that although approval was reportedly granted for the employment of 426 staff, about 700 persons were allegedly recruited.

They further alleged that some job seekers paid between N1 million and N2.5 million to recruitment agents in exchange for employment opportunities.

However, the current Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Akanwa, had earlier distanced her administration from the recruitment exercise, stating that the process was concluded before she assumed office.

She reportedly advised applicants who did not receive their first salary payment to understand that they were not among the 426 personnel approved for employment by the university.

Some members of the university community who spoke anonymously commended the Governing Council for initiating the probe, urging it to ensure a transparent, impartial and comprehensive investigation.

They called for accountability if anyone is found culpable of financial misconduct, abuse of office or recruitment irregularities.

The administrative panel of inquiry is expected to establish the facts surrounding the allegations and recommend appropriate administrative or disciplinary actions where necessary.

In a telephone conversation with the National Ambassador, on the matter, the University's Public Relations Officer (PRO), Mr. Anyaso O. Anyaso, said he was not aware of the development and never returned the call as he promised.

Otti Promises Full Entitlements For Workers

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"So if you have not received your entitlement, maybe you need to show up for verification and you will be paid", Governor Otti assured.

The governor, while thanking the leadership of Ndi Imo in Abia for organising the civic reception, described it as an honour and a demonstration of support and encouragement for his administration.

He reaffirmed his administration's policy of equal opportunity for all

residents, stressing that employment into the State workforce is based on competence rather than state of origin.

"All of you know that in Abia State there is nothing like state of origin. When we are employing both for the healthcare and for the teaching etc, nobody wants to know from where you come from."

"What we are interested in is your capacity, what you have inside your head. We don't care where you come from", he said.

Governor Otti said the

relationship between Abia and Imo transcends political boundaries, insisting that residents of Imo extraction living in the state enjoy the same rights and privileges as Abia indigenes.

According to him, many families of Imo origin have lived in Abia for generations, adding that any attempt to treat them as outsiders is unjustifiable.

"But for us also, we believe that the distinction between Abia and Imo is of no consequence. We are all one and the same people."

Geometric Power, Driving Abia's Economic Growth - Gov Otti

By Okechukwu Ubani

Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, has congratulated the Chairman and Founder of Geometric Power Limited, Professor Barth Nnaji, on his 70th birthday, describing him as a visionary whose power project is helping to transform Abia's economy.

Governor Otti spoke recently, at the International Conference Centre in Enugu during the celebration of Professor Nnaji's 70th birthday.

The governor praised Professor Nnaji for his intelligence, resilience, and determination in completing the Aba Integrated Power Project despite many years of challenges.

He said the project had improved electricity supply, encouraged industrial growth, and supported the state's economic transformation.

Governor Otti said Geometric Power has become a key driver of Abia's economic growth. According to him, the availability of stable electricity gave the state government the confidence to introduce its first electric buses, adding that another batch of the buses will arrive soon.

He also described Professor Nnaji as a man who was ahead of his time, noting that he studied Artificial Intelligence and Robotics many years before the technology became popular around the world.

The governor thanked several national leaders who played important roles in the success of the Geometric Power Project.

He commended the Emir of Kano and former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Muhammadu Sanusi II, for helping to secure funding for the project. The governor also praised former President Olusegun Obasanjo for approving the Aba Ring-fenced Power Project in 2004 and Vice President Kashim Shettima for supporting the gas supply that led to the commissioning of the Geometric Power Plant in February 2024.

Governor Otti urged Nigerians to learn from Professor Nnaji's resilience, hard work, and commitment. He said Professor Nnaji stayed focused on the project for more than 20 years before it became a reality.

In his keynote address, the Emir of Kano, Muhammadu Sanusi II, described stable electricity as the foundation of economic growth. He said the development taking place in Abia through Geometric Power clearly shows the importance of reliable power supply.

In his response, Professor Nnaji thanked Governor Otti, Muhammadu Sanusi II, his

family, friends, and other supporters for standing by him throughout the journey of the Geometric Power Project. He also appreciated everyone who attended his birthday celebration.

A major highlight of the event was the unveiling of Professor Nnaji's biography, titled: The Man Who Dared. The

Story of Bart Nnaji.

The event was attended by former President, Olusegun Obasanjo, Enugu State Governor, Peter Mbah, former Anambra State Governor, Peter Obi, Mrs. Uche Azikiwe, Abia State Commissioner for Power and Public Utilities, Mr. Ikechukwu Monday, and many other distinguished guests.

Abia To Strengthen Climate Governance

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He noted that the workshop came at a critical time across the Niger Delta and Nigeria as a whole, when they face growing environmental pressures, including gully erosion, flooding, land degradation, deforestation, and pollution. The commissioner explained that these are not only environmental concerns but also economic, social and governance challenges that affect livelihoods, infrastructure, food security, and public health.

He explained that the state had taken a deliberate, forward-looking steps by institutionalising sustainable development through the state development plan, (2024 to

2050), now enacted into law. He revealed that this framework provides a clear long term roadmap for inclusive growth and ensures that environmental sustainability is integrated into the state's economic and social priorities.

The commissioner explained that the ministry had undertaken important reforms to strengthen its capacity, through the establishment of a dedicated Climate Change Department to provide institutional focus and drive climate action in a structured accountable manner. He and wished the participants memorable deliberations

Abia First Lady Praises Pastor Ibezim

By Chibumma Ikeokwu

The wife of the Abia State Governor, Mrs. Priscilla Otti, has congratulated Pastor Chioma Hephzibah Ibezim as the Singles and Married International Fellowship celebrated its 19th anniversary. She praised the ministry for changing lives, strengthening families, and spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Speaking through the Commissioner for Women Affairs, Dr. Maureen Aguhukwa, at the International Women's Fire Conference held at the Rehoboth Auditorium, Mrs. Otti said the ministry has grown from a small vision into a global movement that is making a positive impact in many countries.

She said that at a time when many families and marriages face challenges, the ministry has continued to restore broken homes, build strong families, and raise children with good values.

Mrs. Otti praised Pastor Ibezim for her dedication and said the Abia State Government is ready to work with the ministry to help build a better society.

In her welcome address, Pastor Ibezim thanked God for His faithfulness over the past 19 years. She said the ministry, which started from a vision God gave her, has brought hope, healing, restoration, and transformation to many people

around the world.

Pastor Ibezim described the International Women's Fire Conference as a special gathering where women meet God, discover their purpose, receive healing, and are encouraged to make a positive difference in their homes and communities.

She also assured widows of the ministry's continued support through practical help, encouragement, and care.

The keynote speaker and Labour Party candidate for Bende Federal Constituency, Dr. Chima Anyaso, congratulated Pastor Ibezim for her 19 years of faithful service. He said true success is measured by the positive impact people make in the lives of others.

Dr. Anyaso added that his Chimaobi Anyaso Foundation shares the same vision by supporting education, awarding scholarships, providing medical outreach programmes, and assisting market women in different communities.

Change Of Name/ Date of Birth

I, formerly known as Chizaram Nwagboso Emuchay, now wish to be known and addressed as CHIZARAM PRECIOUS AZUBUIKE MOUKA. And my correct Date of Birth is 25 April, 2000. All documents bearing my names remain valid. The general public please take note.

CHIZARAM PRECIOUS
AZUBUIKE MOUKA
25 April, 2000

News

World PR Day: NIPR Boss, Others Visit School For The Blind, Advise Students

By Stephanie Adindu

The Chairman, Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), Abia State Chapter, Onyinye Ralph-Nwachukwu, has urged students of the School for the Blind, Afara, Umuahia, to embrace integrity, respect, continuous learning and self-confidence, as they pursue their dreams.

She gave the charge during the chapter's visit to the school to mark World Public Relations Day, stressing that public relations goes beyond media publicity, but is about building trust and maintaining positive relationships.

The NIPR told the students that effective communication begins with everyday actions, such as kindness, honesty, respect and active listening.

"Public relations is not only about television, radio or speaking to the media. It begins with the way we treat people every day. It is about respect, kindness, honesty, listening and building trust," she said.

The NIPR Chairman encouraged the students not to allow their circumstances or limitations define their future, noting that every person has unique abilities and talents to contribute to society.

She identified self-belief, respectful communication and continuous learning as key principles for personal growth, urging them to build their reputation through truthfulness, discipline, hard work and kindness.

"Never allow anyone to define your future by what you cannot do. Let people know you by your character, knowledge, discipline and determination," she advised.

Nwachukwu said members of NIPR were

inspired by the courage and resilience of the students, describing their determination as a reminder that true strength comes from within.

She urged them to make three commitments: to believe in themselves, keep learning and treat others with respect and kindness.

"Your reputation starts now. It is built by being truthful, respectful, hardworking, punctual and kind. These are the same values we promote in public relations because they help us build trust wherever we go," she added.

In her remarks, the Principal of the school, Mrs. Ngozi Emelike, appreciated the NIPR, Abia State Chapter, for identifying with the school and creating time to inspire the students.

She described the visit as a memorable one, noting that the lessons, encouragement and support received would leave a lasting impact on the students. She commended NIPR for promoting inclusion and reminding the students that they are valued members of society with great potential to succeed.

The event featured special prayers and renditions from the students.

Members who were in attendance were: the NIPR Vice Chairman, Abia Chapter, Mrs. Oluchi Ikechukwu, the financial secretary, Mrs. Grace Gbagi, the Secretary Local Government Pensions Board Abia State, Dr. Kennedy Onyenma, Editor, Abia Newspapers and Publishing Corporation, Umuahia, Deacon Chukwuemeka Egejuru.

Also in attendance were; the Treasurer of the Chapter; Onyinye Obi, the welfare officer; Amaka Unamba, Lekwauwa Ekeoma and Marvellous Duru.

Abia Records Nigeria's Lowest Maternal, Infant Mortality Rates

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Abia State has emerged as Nigeria's best performer in maternal and child health, recording the lowest maternal and infant mortality rates in the first quarter of 2026.

The Commissioner for Information, Prince Okey Kanu, announced this recently, in Umuahia, while briefing journalists on the outcome of the previous State Executive Council Meeting presided over by Governor Alex Otti.

Prince Kanu said the feat was recorded during the First Quarter 2026 Performance Dialogue in the health sector, where states were assessed on key healthcare indicators.

"The 1st Quarter of 2026 convening Performance Dialogue in states, that's in the health sector, Abia State ranked both the lowest maternal and infant mortality in the profiles of the states in the country."

"This is as a result of the huge investments in the health sector of the state", the commissioner revealed.

He attributed the achievement to the state government's sustained investments in renovating, retrofitting and equipping 200 Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) under the first phase of Project Ekwueme.

According to Prince Kanu, 139 PHCs have so far been fully functionalised, including 77 World Bank-supported facilities, while 50



Abia Commissioner for Health, Prof. Enoch Uche

additional centres are currently being equipped.

The commissioner said 12 more PHCs would become operational within two weeks, bringing the total number of functional PHCs in the state to 151.

He also said that healthcare delivery has improved through the state's Digital Health Link project, with 9,136 patients enrolled in the digital platform across nine hospitals within the last 10 months.

Prince Kanu further disclosed that enrolment under the Abia State Health Insurance Scheme had increased from 40,000 beneficiaries in December 2024 to 225,581 as of July 2026.

The commissioner revealed that the government is finalising

work on the Obingwa General Hospital, which had undergone rehabilitation and expansion and is being equipped with modern digital health and telemedicine facilities ahead of its inauguration for public use.

He also announced that Abia was leading a joint initiative involving Anambra, Delta and Akwalbom states to digitise immunisation records and improve vaccination tracking for children.

Prince Kanu advised Abia residents to observe proper food hygiene and safety practices to prevent food poisoning, which he said, is the focus of the Ministry of Health's weekly public health advisory.

He added that the state has not recorded any disease of public health concern, including confirmed cases of COVID-19, Mpox, Lassa fever, Ebola, yellow fever, cholera or rabies.

Also speaking, the Commissioner for Health, Prof. Enoch Uche, who provided further insight, said the quarterly performance assessment was coordinated by the Federal Ministry of Health using data collected directly from health facilities nationwide.

Prof Uche said Abia recorded only one maternal death in the first quarter of 2026, the same figure reported in the last quarter of 2025, which reflects sustained improvements in maternal healthcare.

The Health commissioner added that neonatal mortality declined from nine cases in the fourth quarter of 2025 to seven in the first quarter of 2026.

According to him; "The improved performance validates the state government's sustained investments in strengthening primary healthcare, which addresses about 80 per cent of the population's healthcare needs".

Prof Uche said Abia, alongside Delta, Akwalbom and Anambra states, was championing the development of a digital immunisation registry that assigns every child a unique vaccination tracking number.

Rachael Ifeoku Ike Female Education Foundation Holds 2026 Scholarship Award

By Offor Okechukwu

The Rachael Ifeoku Ike Female Education Foundation Holds 2026 Scholarship Award Scheme recently at Amogudu Hall, Idima Abam in Arochukwu LGA of Abia State.

Speaking during the event, the Coordinator of the Scholarship Scheme and the General Manager, Abia Newspapers & Publishing Corporation, Chief Jones Nnanna Ike, said that the scheme was established to honour his late mother Mrs Rachael Ifeoku Ike, because of her role in pioneering female education in the community, as well as, her advancement of female rights.

Chief Ike stated that the scheme is intended to assist needy students through institutions of learning.

He commended the beneficiaries for their commitment towards furthering their education in institutions of higher learning.

Chief Ike also stated that the scheme was originated by Chief James Chijioke Ume, the Ike Abam, who also donated N50 million for its take-off.

In his remarks, the founder of Unubiko Foundation, Chief James Chijioke Ume, the Ike Abam, represented by the Rector, Ogbonnaya Onu Polytechnic, Aba, Dr. Christopher Kalu, said that his foundation had sponsored and awarded scholarship to several students.

He said that their intervention in female education in Idima Abam through the auspices of the Rachael Ifeoku Ike Female Education Foundation, was

to help raise up female education in Idima Community.

Speaking, the Chairman on the occasion, Chief Samuel Kalu and former President General Idima Abam Development Union, Comrade Dike Patrick, said it is good to honour Mrs. Ike through her female education programme, aimed at promoting education of female children in the area, as she worked tirelessly during her life time to ensure that females in the community were educated.

In his commendation, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Legislative Matters, Mr. Lukeman Ukara, commended Chief Jones Ike for his firm sustenance of his late mother's annual scholarship scheme, to assist female students in Idima Abam.

Ukara stressed that Rachael Ifeoku Ike Female

Education Foundation would go a long way to reducing the burden on parents of the beneficiaries, as well as, support the education needs of the beneficiaries.

He further advised the recipients to live up to expectations and remain good ambassadors of the foundation and the state, under the visionary leadership of the governor, Dr. Alex Otti.

The beneficiaries, including Favour Ikechukwu, studying at Abia State University, Uturu, Chidera Igwe of Ogbonnaya Onu Polytechnic and Amarachi Udo of Federal University, Otuoke expressed delight and described the scholarship scheme as a big relief from their parents.

News

Eno, Repositioning Akwa Ibom As Nigeria's Tourism Destination - Udoh

From Lovina Emole

Delivery Advisor to Governor Umo Eno on Hospitality Infrastructure, Sir Charles Udoh, said the governor is repositioning the state as one of Nigeria's premier tourism destinations.

This came even with the emergence of two floating restaurants at the ARISE Park Resort billed for commissioning in September.

Fielding questions from newsmen, Udoh said the waterfront restaurants within the multi-billion-naira ARISE Park, is among several signature attractions expected to distinguish the resort from conventional recreational facilities across the country.

He said the resort represents the transformation of a former erosion site into a world-class tourism and leisure destination.

According to him, beyond the floating restaurants, the park will feature a children's playground, an indoor sports centre, a mini golf course, luxury apartments, conference facilities, boating activities, restaurants, lounges and other relaxation spots designed to attract visitors from within and outside Nigeria.

He explained that the project was deliberately conceived to cater for families, corporate organisations, tourists and leisure seekers, making it a destination with year-round appeal.

"There's something for everyone. Families have the children's playground, sports enthusiasts have indoor recreational facilities, golfers can enjoy both the mini golf course and a state-of-the-art golf simulation room, conference organisers have dedicated meeting facilities, while visitors seeking accommodation can stay in the apartments," Udoh said.

Udoh described ARISE Park as one of Governor Umo Eno's flagship tourism investments aimed at diversifying the state's economy, creating jobs and boosting internally generated revenue through tourism.

MOUUAU, NRCRI Move To Partner Abia Govt To Boost Sustainable Food System

By Okereke Kate

The Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUUAU), and the National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI), have expressed their readiness to partner with the Abia State Government to strengthen sustainable food systems and enhance agricultural productivity across the state.

The commitment was made during the flag-off of the Abia State Farmers' Inputs Support Programme held in Umuahia Township Stadium recently, where the heads of the two agricultural institutions



commended Governor Alex Otti's administration for prioritizing agriculture as a key driver of economic growth and food security.

Speaking at the event, the Vice-Chancellor of MOUUAU, Prof. Ursula Ngozi Akanwa, applauded Governor Otti for his

deliberate investments across various sectors, particularly agriculture, describing the initiative as a strategic step towards improving livelihoods and achieving food sufficiency.

She noted that the farmers' support programme would not only provide critical inputs to farmers but also strengthen the agricultural value chain, create employment opportunities and increase household incomes.

Prof. Akanwa said the initiative aligns with the vision of MOUUAU, assuring that the university is ready to collaborate with the state government in promoting sustainable food systems through research,

innovation, training and extension services.

Also speaking, the Executive Director of the National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI), Umudike, Prof. Chiedozie Egesi, described Abia as one of the most agriculturally endowed states in Nigeria, citing its fertile soil and favourable climate as major advantages.

According to him, the state has the potential to become Nigeria's agricultural food production hub, adding that research institutions such as NRCRI are willing to support the government's efforts to unlock that potential.

Prof. Egesi stressed that programmes like the Farmers' Inputs Support Programme represent the beginning of a brighter future for agriculture in the state.

Delivering the keynote address, he explained that while cassava remains one of the country's major staple crops, it also serves as a source of livelihood for millions of Nigerians and forms the backbone of many rural communities.

He said NRCRI remains committed to the development of root and tuber crops through research, improved seed systems, farmer training, value chain development and innovations aimed at enhancing food security and increasing farmers' incomes.

Prof. Egesi emphasised that providing farm inputs alone would not guarantee higher productivity unless farmers receive adequate training on their proper application.

"We have organic fertilizers that we can use to improve yields", he said, stressing the need to promote sustainable farming practices alongside the distribution of quality agricultural inputs.

He added that equipping farmers with the right knowledge and skills would ensure better harvests, improved incomes and stronger food systems capable of supporting the state's agricultural transformation.

Communities Seek Abia Govt's Help Over Erosion Menace

By Okereke Kate

Residents of Amamba, Amankwo, Agbazu and Eluama communities in Uzuakoli, Bende Local Government Area of Abia State, have appealed to the Federal, Abia State and the Bende Local governments Council to urgently intervene in the worsening gully erosion that has destroyed homes, farmlands and continues to threaten lives and property.

Speaking during a media briefing at one of the erosion sites, the President-General of Amamba Community, Sir Nelson Umezurike, the President-General of Eluama Community, Onyebinanma Sunday Onyebinanma, alongside victims including Chisaraokwu Onyeausi, Okechukwu Nwosu and Mrs. Ihekumere Nnenneya Chikereze, described the situation as a humanitarian and environmental disaster requiring immediate government attention.

The community leaders explained that the gathering was not a protest but an appeal to draw the attention of relevant authorities to the magnitude of the crisis.

"We are not protesting. What we are doing is using this opportunity to draw the attention of

government to the frustration we are facing. If we wanted to protest, we would have gone to the main road," Umezurike said.

They commended members of the media for visiting the affected communities, expressing hope that widespread coverage would help attract prompt intervention from government agencies.

According to Umezurike, the affected area was originally developed as a residential layout where many people had already built their homes before the devastating erosion began.

He disclosed that the community initially spent over ₦7 million on palliative erosion control measures, but the project was washed away within weeks by heavy floodwaters.

Umezurike blamed the worsening erosion on poor drainage construction by contractors handling an internal road project, alleging that the drainage channel was abandoned without being connected to the appropriate discharge point.

"When we asked the contractors to connect the drainage to the proper discharge channel, our efforts yielded no result. That marked the beginning of this disaster," he said.

The community leader further revealed that in 2019 residents contributed more than ₦60 million to execute another erosion control project after seven houses had already collapsed. However, the intervention also failed due to the overwhelming volume of floodwater.

He alleged that another road project later compounded the problem when contractors again failed to connect drainage channels to the proper outlet despite repeated appeals by the community.

Umezurike acknowledged the efforts of political leaders, including the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Benjamin Kalu, Senator Orji Uzor Kalu, Governor Alex Otti through his representatives, and the member representing the area in the Abia State House of Assembly, for drawing attention to the environmental challenge.

However, he stressed that the scale of destruction had gone beyond what the community could manage on its own.

He appealed to the Ecological Project Office, the Presidency, the National Assembly, the Abia State Government and the Bende Local Government Council to urgently provide lasting

solutions to the erosion menace.

"We are appealing to all levels of government to intervene because protecting the lives and property of citizens is one of the primary responsibilities of government. We believe we have a listening government, and we are pleading for urgent action," he stated.

According to him, the gully erosion has already swallowed about seven buildings, displaced several families and continues to expand after every rainfall, leaving residents in constant fear.

"This place has rendered people homeless. Anytime it rains, we cannot sleep with our two eyes closed because the erosion keeps expanding," he lamented.

He added that although the community had provided temporary assistance to displaced residents, many had relocated to neighbouring communities while awaiting government intervention.

Victims of the disaster also made emotional appeals for urgent assistance.

Speaking during the visit, Mrs. Ihekumere Nnenneya Chikereze said residents now live in fear because the erosion continues to worsen with every rainfall.

Editorial

Judiciary Must Stand Firm As 2027 Approaches

With the 2027 general elections drawing closer, Nigeria stands at another defining moment in its democratic journey. Elections are not merely contests for political power; they are tests of the strength of national institutions, the rule of law and the commitment of leaders to democratic values. Among these institutions, the judiciary has a crucial responsibility in ensuring that electoral disputes are resolved fairly and that citizens retain confidence in the democratic process.

Since the return to civilian rule in 1999, Nigeria's democracy has recorded progress, but challenges remain. Electoral disputes, conflicting court orders, prolonged litigation and allegations of institutional compromise have at various times affected public trust in the justice system. As political activities intensify ahead of 2027, every institution must work to protect democracy from forces capable of weakening it.

Judicial officers must remember that their loyalty is to the Constitution and the law, not to political parties, powerful individuals or the executive arm of government. The judiciary must resist intimidation, inducement and every form of pressure that could compromise its independence. A judiciary that delivers justice without fear or favour strengthens democracy, while one perceived as vulnerable to political influence damages public confidence.

The speedy dispensation of justice is equally important. Election-related cases require timely attention because delays can create uncertainty and prolong political tension. Justice delayed often creates room for suspicion and instability. The courts must continue to ensure that electoral matters are handled efficiently, transparently and in accordance with the law.

Court judgments must also be respected and enforced. The executive arm of government has a constitutional responsibility to obey valid court

decisions, whether favourable or inconvenient. Selective compliance with judicial pronouncements weakens the rule of law and sends a dangerous signal about respect for democratic institutions.

The executive must therefore uphold the principle of separation of powers and avoid actions or statements capable of intimidating judicial officers. Beyond rhetoric, government must provide the necessary support, welfare and institutional protection required to enable the judiciary function independently.

The National Assembly and state Houses of Assembly also have important roles. Legislators must strengthen laws that protect judicial independence, improve electoral justice and promote accountability. They must avoid using legislative powers to advance partisan interests at the expense of institutions that safeguard democracy.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) must also rise to the occasion. The commission must not only be seen as neutral; it must practically demonstrate neutrality through its actions, decisions and conduct. Public confidence will come from transparent processes, equal treatment of political parties, strict adherence to electoral laws and the courage to resist pressure from any quarter.

Other stakeholders, including political parties, security agencies, civil society organisations and the media, must play responsible roles. Political parties should avoid violence, vote-buying and unnecessary litigation. Security agencies must remain professional and non-partisan, while civil society groups and the media should promote voter education, accountability and credible information.

Nigerian citizens also have a responsibility to protect democracy by rejecting manipulation, demanding accountability and participating peacefully in the electoral process.

The 2027 elections offer Nigeria another opportunity to demonstrate democratic maturity as seen in other developed climes. The success of the process will depend on the courage and integrity of institutions and individuals entrusted with protecting the nation's constitutional order. If the judiciary remains independent, INEC demonstrates genuine neutrality, the executive respects constitutional limits, legislators strengthen democratic institutions and all stakeholders place national interest above personal ambition, Nigeria will continue its journey towards a stronger democracy.

LETTERS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO:
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An Open Letter to Governor Dr Alex Otti: Thank You for the Good Work, But Please Do More for Ndi Abia

Dear Editor

I write through your respected newspaper to sincerely appreciate the Governor of Abia State, His Excellency, Dr. Alex Otti, OFR, for the remarkable work he is doing across our dear state. His administration has brought fresh hope to many people, and the positive changes taking place in different parts of Abia are clear for everyone to see.

Since assuming office, Governor Otti has shown strong commitment to good governance. The rehabilitation and construction of roads have made transportation easier for residents and businesses. His government has also taken important steps to improve healthcare, strengthen the education sector, pay workers' salaries and pensioners on time, and make Abia cleaner, safer, and more attractive to investors. These efforts have restored confidence in government and given many Ndi Abia renewed hope for a better future.

The Governor has also demonstrated that public resources can be used for the benefit of the people. His focus on transparency, accountability, and quality projects has earned him the respect of many citizens. Today, Abia is receiving positive attention from Nigerians because of the visible progress being made across the state.

On behalf of many well-meaning citizens, I sincerely thank Governor Alex Otti for his dedication, hard work, and determination to transform Abia State. His efforts are being noticed and appreciated both within and outside the state. Every meaningful development, no matter how small, contributes to improving the lives of our people.

While celebrating these achievements, I humbly appeal to His Excellency not to relent. There is still more work to be done. Many rural communities need better roads, clean drinking water, electricity, and improved healthcare facilities. More opportunities should also be created for young people through job creation, skills acquisition programmes, agriculture, and support for small and medium-sized businesses. Women should continue to receive empowerment programmes that will help them become financially independent.

I also encourage the Governor to continue listening to the people and remain focused on fulfilling his promises. Every government faces challenges, but with determination, honesty, and consistency, those challenges can be overcome. Sustaining the current pace of development will make Abia a stronger economy and a model for other states in Nigeria.

As citizens, we also have a responsibility to support government policies that are beneficial to the state, protect public infrastructure, obey the law, and contribute to the peace and development of our communities. Building a better Abia is a shared responsibility.

I pray that God will continue to grant Governor Alex Otti wisdom, good health, strength, and divine guidance as he continues to serve the people of Abia State. May his administration continue to bring peace, progress, and prosperity to every part of our dear state.

Thank you for giving this letter a place in your respected newspaper.

Yours faithfully,
Ifeanyi Ogidi
Concerned Citizen of Abia State

NATIONAL Ambassador
"Uplift the people, project the nation"

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Abuja Digest

with Sophina Ovuike
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Nigeria, Sant'Egidio Deepen Partnership On Peace Building

Nigeria has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening collaboration with the Community of Sant'Egidio in advancing peacebuilding, interfaith dialogue, humanitarian assistance and community development across the country.

The commitment was made recently when the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Dunoma Umar Ahmed, received a delegation from the Community of Sant'Egidio at the Ministry's headquarters, Tafawa Balewa House, Abuja.

The delegation was led by Professor Jan De Volder and Professor Stefano Orlando and accompanied by officials of the Embassy of Italy in Nigeria.

The meeting built on earlier engagements between the Community and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu, with discussions centred on expanding co-operation in conflict prevention, mediation, youth development, humanitarian intervention and support for vulnerable communities.

Speaking during the meeting, Professor De Volder highlighted the Community of Sant'Egidio's growing presence in several Nigerian states, noting its contributions to grassroots peacebuilding, education, poverty reduction and community dialogue.

He also extended an invitation to the Minister of Foreign Affairs to participate in the 40th

International Meeting for Peace, scheduled to take place in Assisi, Italy, in October 2026.

The delegation further proposed the establishment of a formal cooperation framework between Nigeria and the Community of Sant'Egidio to facilitate long-term collaboration in areas of shared interest.

In his remarks, Ambassador Ahmed commended the Community's longstanding global commitment to peace, reconciliation and humanitarian service, describing its work as a valuable contribution to promoting social harmony and sustainable development.

He reiterated Nigeria's readiness to partner with faith-based and civil society organisations dedicated to fostering peaceful coexistence, social inclusion and conflict prevention.

The permanent secretary identified priority areas for future collaboration, including youth leadership development, vocational skills acquisition, interfaith engagement, support for internally displaced and vulnerable persons, education, healthcare delivery, poverty alleviation and community-based peace initiatives.

Both parties agreed to sustain consultations aimed at developing an appropriate framework for co-operation and implementing joint programmes that will contribute to peace, stability and inclusive development in Nigeria.

2027: Eni Uche Seeks Support For Otti

An Abia-born technocrat, Mr. Eni Uche, has said that the outcome of the 2027 general elections in Abia State will be determined by the performance of political office holders rather than the political parties they represent.

Uche stated this in Abuja shortly after returning from an assessment tour of Abia State, where he inspected ongoing developmental projects across the state.

The technocrat, who is the son of the late Justice A. K. Uche, a former First Republic legislator who represented the Ohafia-Bende Constituency in the then Eastern Nigeria House of Assembly, described the transformation under the administration of Governor Alex Otti as remarkable.

According to him, the rehabilitation and construction of roads, modernization of transport terminals, urban renewal initiatives, improvements in healthcare facilities,



Eni Uche

investments in public education, and other infrastructure projects have significantly transformed many parts of the state and strengthened public confidence in the present administration.

Uche recalled that he supported Governor Otti throughout his electioneering campaigns until his eventual victory at the polls.

He also disclosed that, before the current administration assumed

office, he instituted a legal action aimed at preventing the immediate past government from accessing funds he believed could have been mismanaged before the transition.

Uche said his recent assessment of projects across the state convinced him that the Otti administration has set a new benchmark for governance, stressing that future elections should be judged on tangible

achievements rather than party affiliation.

He praised the member representing Arochuku/Ohafia Federal Constituency, Hon. Ibe Okwara Osonwa, for what he described as impactful interventions in education, healthcare, youth empowerment, and other constituency development programmes.

Uche urged senators, members of the House of Representatives, and other elected public office holders to embrace a performance-driven approach to governance, noting that the electorate is becoming increasingly interested in visible development and quality service delivery.

"The era when political parties alone determined electoral victory is gradually giving way to one where performance speaks louder. Leaders who deliver meaningful development will continue to earn the confidence and support of the people," he said.

Sulu-Gambari Assumes Duties As Nigeria's High Commissioner In Malaysia

Nigeria's High Commissioner to Malaysia, Ambassador Ahmed Olatunji Sulu-Gambari, has formally assumed his diplomatic duties after presenting his Letters of Credence to His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, Yang di-Pertuan Agong of Malaysia, in a ceremony that reaffirmed the longstanding friendship and growing cooperation between both nations.

The credential presentation ceremony took place at the Singgahsana Kecil, Istana Negara (National Palace) in Kuala Lumpur, where Ambassador Sulu-Gambari was received with full diplomatic and ceremonial honours, including a General Salute mounted by the Royal Guard. He was accompanied by the First Secretary and Head of Chancery, Ms. Onyinnye Maryjane Nwefuru.

The ceremony also

featured the accreditation of ambassadors and high commissioners-designate from the Republic of Albania, Brunei Darussalam, the Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Türkiye and the Republic of Mauritius, underscoring Malaysia's commitment to diplomatic engagement with the international community.

During the audience with the Malaysian Monarch, Ambassador Sulu-Gambari conveyed the warm greetings and best wishes of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

He expressed appreciation for the opportunity to formally present his credentials and reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to deepening the longstanding cordial relations between Abuja

and Kuala Lumpur through enhanced cooperation in diplomacy, trade, investment and cultural exchange.

Responding, His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim fondly recalled his longstanding acquaintance and cordial interactions with Nigerians, describing the relationship between the two countries as one built on enduring friendship, mutual goodwill and respect.

The Malaysian monarch also expressed his desire to undertake an official visit to Nigeria, signalling confidence in the expanding bilateral partnership.

A memorable highlight of the audience was the King's admiration for Ambassador Sulu-Gambari's distinctive traditional Nigerian attire, which opened discussions on promoting Nigeria's

rich cultural heritage and strengthening people-to-people relations through cultural diplomacy.

The Nigerian envoy pledged to pursue initiatives that would translate the discussions into concrete cultural and diplomatic programmes in the near future.

His majesty congratulated Ambassador Sulu-Gambari on his appointment as Nigeria's High Commissioner to Malaysia and wished him a successful, productive and fulfilling tour of duty.

The presentation of the Letters of Credence officially marks the commencement of Ambassador Sulu-Gambari's tenure in Malaysia and is expected to further consolidate the strong diplomatic, economic and cultural ties between Nigeria and Malaysia.

Special Interview

Abia Under Gov Otti Is Safe, Ready for Business – Col. Ukoha (Rtd) ...Insists Agency Knows No Political Party, Only Peace and Security

Security remains the bedrock upon which sustainable development, economic growth and investors' confidence are built. In Abia State, the steady improvement in the security environment has been credited with boosting business activities, attracting new investments and restoring public confidence in governance.

In this exclusive interview, the General Manager/Chief Executive Officer of the Abia State Homeland Security Agency, Col. Chidi Kalu Ukoha (Rtd), offers an in-depth assessment of the state's security landscape, the agency's achievements, and the collaborative efforts that have made Abia one of the safest states in Nigeria. He also speaks on intelligence gathering, the fight against cultism, kidnapping, drug-related crimes and other security threats, the proposed State Police, preparations for the 2027 general elections, and the agency's unwavering commitment to professionalism and political neutrality.

Declaring that "Abia is safe and ready for business," the Homeland Security boss assures local and foreign investors of a conducive environment for investment, while emphasising that the agency remains completely apolitical, with its sole mandate being the protection of lives and property.

The Editor, National Ambassador Newspapers, Dcn. Chukwuemeka Egejuru, anipr, alongside Stephanie Nneoma Okoroafor, engaged the retired military officer in this revealing conversation.

Excerpts:

Can you assess the current security situation in Abia State. What was it like before, and what is it like now?

I won't say much about what the security situation was before because I came on board after the law establishing this agency was enacted not quite long. However, from available records and reports, the state faced serious security challenges, including cult-related violence, kidnapping, and activities of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the Eastern Security Network (ESN). At one point, two Chinese nationals were kidnapped and a person was killed.

Since the establishment of the Abia State Homeland Security Agency, working alongside Operation Crush, local vigilantes, conventional security agencies and, most importantly, the people of Abia State, there has been a remarkable improvement.

Kidnapping has reduced drastically, cult-related crimes have declined significantly, and IPOB/ESN activities have been reduced to almost zero, except for isolated incidents, particularly in parts of Abia North, where concerted efforts are still being made to address them.

Overall, I can confidently say that the security situation in Abia State has improved dramatically.

If you were to rate the state's security on a scale of one to ten, what score would you give it?

I would rate it seven out of ten. There is still room for improvement, but considering where we are coming from, a score of seven represents significant progress.

What would you consider the greatest achievement of the Homeland Security Agency under your leadership?

Our greatest achievement is the increased confidence citizens now have in the security of Abia State.

Businesses are thriving, investors are coming into the state, and residents feel safer. Those are the clearest indicators that our efforts are yielding positive results.

Many people now describe Abia as one of the safest states in the South-East. What factors have contributed to this achievement?

The first factor is leadership.

Governor Dr. Alex Chioma Otti, OFR, has demonstrated exceptional commitment to security. He understands that without security, development cannot thrive. He has consistently provided the necessary support, funding, logistics, training and equipment required by security agencies.

Secondly, the personnel of the Homeland Security Agency have shown dedication and professionalism.

Finally, the citizens themselves deserve commendation. They now understand that security is everyone's responsibility.

Recently, during a kidnapping incident around the Ibeku axis, residents mobilised and confronted the kidnappers, forcing them to abandon their victims and flee. That level of public participation is encouraging and demonstrates collective ownership of security.

What are the major security threats confronting Abia State, and how has your agency addressed them?

Security threats vary across the state's three senatorial zones.

In Abia South, we mainly contend with cult-related killings, child trafficking and drug-related crimes.

In Abia Central, there are occasional cases of kidnapping and armed robbery.

In Abia North, the challenges include isolated activities of proscribed groups and kidnapping.

One major factor driving many of these crimes is drug abuse. We therefore work closely with the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), carrying out raids on suspected drug locations and dismantling criminal networks.

We have also intensified public enlightenment, encouraging residents to "See Something, Say Something." This has generated useful intelligence that has led to several arrests.

Occasionally, we record herder-community conflicts. Abia State has zero tolerance for open grazing. While we allow herders who are merely passing through the state to do so peacefully, anyone who violates the law is arrested and, where necessary, their cattle are confiscated. Fortunately, such incidents are becoming increasingly rare.

As a security expert, do you think Governor Alex Otti has done enough to strengthen security in Abia State?

His Excellency has done exceptionally well.

Beyond what has already been achieved, more security infrastructure is being put in place and will be unveiled in due course to improve emergency response across the state.

For example, the Homeland Security Agency operates a call centre that enables residents to report emergencies.

Our goal is to shorten response time significantly. Rather than taking 30 minutes or an hour to respond, we are working



Col. Chidi Kalu Ukoha (Rtd),

towards a situation where security personnel can arrive at any incident scene within five minutes.

Security and business are closely linked. How has improved security impacted investment in Abia State?

Improved security has greatly boosted investor confidence.

We have witnessed increased visits by local and foreign investors conducting feasibility studies and establishing businesses.

Businesses that had almost collapsed due to insecurity are becoming active again.

There has also been a noticeable influx of both Abians and non-Abians into the state. Recently, non-indigenes residing in Aba organised an event to appreciate the state government. That clearly reflects the confidence people now have in the security and business environment in Abia.

What message do you have for investors both within Nigeria and in the Diaspora?

My message is simple:

Abia State is safe, and Abia is open for business.

How does the Homeland Security Agency collaborate with other security organisations?

We maintain excellent working relationships with local vigilante groups, private security organisations and all national security agencies, including the Police, Military, NDLEA, Immigration Service, Customs Service and the Fire Service.

Regular Security Council meetings enable us to coordinate operations effectively, eliminate duplication of efforts and maximise available resources.

What exactly is the mandate of the Abia State Homeland Security Agency?

Our mandate is to ensure peace and security across Abia State and to protect the lives and property of residents and visitors.

Does the agency prosecute offenders?

No.

The agency is not part of the criminal justice system. Our responsibility is to make arrests, gather preliminary intelligence and hand suspects over to the Nigeria Police or other relevant agencies for investigation and prosecution.

How does the agency coordinate intelligence gathering and emergency response?

Our personnel are deployed across all 17 Local Government Areas of the state.

They conduct daily monitoring and submit intelligence reports.

Whenever actionable intelligence is received, we respond immediately.

We also operate a call centre through which residents report emergencies, enabling rapid deployment of personnel.

Depending on the nature of the offence, suspects are handed over to the appropriate agency, whether the Police, NDLEA, Immigration Service or others.

What is your view on the proposed establishment of State Police, and how prepared is Abia State?

The proposal is still undergoing legislative consideration at the federal level.

Once the legal framework is finalised, the state will determine how best to integrate with the system.

There will certainly be a need for specialised training, institutional restructuring and clear operational guidelines.

The exact responsibilities of State Police will depend on the eventual law, particularly regarding the division of responsibilities between State Police and the Nigeria Police Force.

As for readiness, Abia is well-positioned in terms of commitment, although institutional structures are still evolving.

Many Nigerians are hearing about State Police for the first time. Can you explain what it means?

State Police will essentially be community-based policing.

It will be responsible for maintaining law and order within individual states, while the Nigeria Police Force retains nationwide jurisdiction.

The objective is to bring policing closer to the people because crime is often local.

I strongly support the initiative because localised policing will improve crime prevention and response.

Some people fear State Police could be abused by state governments. What is your view?

That is why the legal framework is extremely important.

There must be clearly defined jurisdiction, operational guidelines and safeguards to prevent political interference.

State Police should never become a political tool. The law must ensure professionalism and accountability.

What relationship does the Homeland Security Agency maintain with traditional institutions?

We work closely with traditional rulers through community vigilante groups.

They provide valuable local intelligence and help us understand the unique security dynamics within their communities.

Their support has been extremely beneficial.

What message do you have for residents regarding security?

Security remains everyone's responsibility.

Residents should be law-abiding, loyal to the state and the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and always remember:

If you see something, say something.

Together, we can keep Abia safe.

Does the agency also handle cybercrime and technology-related offences?

Where such cases are reported to us, we act as the first responder by making arrests where necessary before handing suspects over to the Police and other competent agencies for detailed investigation and prosecution.

With the 2027 elections approaching, how neutral will the agency be?

The Homeland Security Agency is a professional and completely apolitical organisation.

Our responsibility is to ensure peace and security before, during and after the elections.

We do not recognise political parties or candidates. We are apolitical.

We are completely colour-blind when it comes to politics.

Our loyalty is to peace, security and the people of Abia State.

What is your vision for the agency over the next couple of years?

Our vision is to build a stronger and more technologically equipped agency capable of combating sophisticated crimes.

Our ultimate goal is to ensure that Abia State remains one of the safest states not only in Nigeria but across West Africa.

Your final message to Abians and its residents?

Everything is well. I simply encourage everyone to continue supporting security agencies because security is a collective responsibility. Together, we can sustain the peace and progress that Abia State is currently enjoying.

Thank you.

Religion

Gateways To Financial Fortune

By David Oyedepo

The next level is corporate tithing. Many people may disagree when they hear me say this, but they were not there when God gave me the instruction. I know what we have practised as a Commission, where it has brought us, and how many people in this Church have experienced remarkable breakthroughs because they obeyed God.

One of my spiritual sons received God's instruction in 1995 to tithe the income of his company from the very beginning. Today, one part of that business records an annual turnover of about ₦25 billion, and the company is still investing heavily in Kingdom advancement. God honours those who honour Him.

God wants you to enjoy life and leave a legacy of wealth for future generations. Giving begins after tithing because tithing comes first. As the Bible says, "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse... and I will rebuke the devourer for your sake" (Malachi 3:10). Tithing secures God's blessings and His protection over your finances.

Tithing is like insurance. When your property is insured, the insurance company covers your loss if something goes wrong. In the same way, God promises to protect the finances of those who honour Him with their tithes. That covenant keeps the devourer away from your resources.

The good news is that your story is changing. You will not remain at the same level.

Tithing is a covenant obligation. It is not based on feelings or emotions. It is an act of obedience. My grandmother used to say that the tithe is God's portion that makes the remaining ninety percent meaningful. Until God's portion is returned to Him, the rest remains exposed to the devourer.

According to Malachi 3:10, God promises to rebuke the devourer for those who obey Him. No matter how difficult the economy becomes, God's covenant remains effective. Those who walk in covenant with Him can still prosper in hard times.

Our Church is a living testimony of this truth. We have undertaken major projects without depending on wealthy individuals or foreign funding. We have never called rich members together to finance God's work because the God who blesses His people is able to provide for His own work.

Many young people reject tithing today because they have never practised it or experienced its results. You cannot understand the power of a covenant you have never obeyed.

Let me share two examples.

David Green, founder of Hobby Lobby, started his business in 1972 with just 600 dollars. He learnt the principle of tithing from his father, who taught him that 90 percent with God's blessing is better than 100 percent without Him. Today, his company is worth billions of dollars and gives about 50 percent of its profits to support the Gospel. The company also keeps its stores closed on Sundays.

Jesus said in John 10:37-38, "Believe the

works." Results are proofs. Just as there is no financial tension in this Commission, financial tension will disappear from your life as you remain faithful to God.

On September 4, 1987, while studying Hebrews 7, the Lord showed me that the same way He opens heaven over individuals through tithing, He also opens heaven over organisations, institutions, and churches that practise it. That encounter brought this Commission under an open heaven, and we continue to enjoy God's abundant provision.

Today, many projects are going on simultaneously without placing financial pressure on the leadership or members. God remains our source. Since 1991, I have maintained a personal accounting system to ensure I pay my tithe accurately because I understand the importance of this covenant.

People sometimes describe me as one of the richest pastors in the world. True

riches are not about borrowing, begging, or living in lack. They are about living under God's continual supply.

As members of this Liberation family, poverty, lack, and want are not your portion. Stay faithful because your story is changing.

No matter how small your income is, begin where you are. If you earn ₦10, your tithe is ₦1. If you earn ₦20, your tithe is ₦2. God raises people from where they are when they faithfully obey Him.

John D. Rockefeller began tithing at the age of 17. He became the first American billionaire and a major supporter of God's work. His generosity continues to impact lives long after his death. Covenant obedience produces lasting wealth.

As you honour God through faithful obedience, may you experience His blessings, financial freedom, and lasting prosperity. Your days of lack are coming to an end, in Jesus' name.



...As the Bible says, "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse... and I will rebuke the devourer for your sake" (Malachi 3:10). Tithing secures God's blessings and His protection over your finances.



Family Matters

By Okechukwu Uboni

A happy marriage grows when a husband and wife understand, respect, and appreciate each other's differences. Men and women are not the same, and that is not a problem. Problems begin when one partner tries to change the other instead of accepting them for who they are.

Some wives expect their husbands to think, speak, and react exactly the way they do. In the same way, some husbands expect their wives to change their personality to please them. This often leads to disappointment, arguments, and unnecessary conflict. Every person is different, and those differences should be respected, not criticized.

A strong and healthy marriage is built when both husband and wife accept each other with love. Instead of trying to change your spouse, encourage them, support them, and help them grow. Focus more on each other's strengths than on weaknesses. Be patient with each other, forgive mistakes, and always communicate

Love And Respect In Marriage

with kindness and understanding.

When couples choose acceptance over criticism and love over control, their relationship becomes stronger. They learn to solve problems together, support each other through difficult times, and build a home filled with peace, trust, and lasting happiness.

Every husband wants to feel respected, trusted, and appreciated. Respect is shown not only through words but also through your attitude, your tone of voice, and the way you treat each other, especially during disagreements. Even when you do not agree, speak with kindness and respect.



Husbands and wives should spend quality time together, care for each other, and meet each other's emotional and physical needs.

Most husbands also need encouragement. They want their wives to believe in them, support their dreams, and appreciate their efforts. A few kind words of praise can give a man confidence and make him feel valued.

Love and affection are also important in marriage. Husbands and wives should spend quality time together, care for each other, and meet each other's emotional and physical needs. Faithfulness, loyalty, and good communication help build trust and keep the marriage strong.

A peaceful home does not happen

by chance. It is created when both husband and wife choose to love, honour, care for, and support each other every day. A husband should love, protect, provide for, and cherish his wife, while a wife should respect, encourage, and stand by her husband.

Marriage is not about control, pride, or proving who is more important. It is about working together as one team. There will be challenges, but couples who forgive quickly, communicate with love, and support each other through difficult times become stronger together.

Always remember that you married a partner, not someone to control or compete with. No one is perfect, so be patient with each other. Encourage one another, help each other grow, and never stop showing love and kindness.

A happy marriage is built on love, trust, patience, faithfulness, understanding, and mutual respect. When husband and wife put God at the centre of their home, pray together, and honour each other, they build a strong family that can overcome life's challenges and enjoy lasting peace and happiness.



News

Shettima Unveils Niger Delta Agric Fund

From Aligwe Stella -PH

Vice President, Kashim Shettima, has unveiled the Niger Delta Agricultural Development and Investment Fund, saying Nigeria must return to the soil to drive economic growth and food security.

Shettima inaugurated the fund and a Coordinating Council for agricultural development at the Niger Delta Agricultural Development and Investment Summit held at the Banquet Hall, Presidential Villa, Abuja.

The summit, jointly organised by the Office of the Vice President and the Niger Delta Development Commission, NDDC, with support from the nine Niger Delta states, was themed: "Unlocking Investment for Sustainable Agricultural Transformation in the Niger Delta".

The VP said the summit was directly tied to President Bola Tinubu's agrarian programme under the Renewed Hope Agenda.

"Before oil took centre stage in our economy, it was the soil that paid our bills. We must, therefore, return to agriculture for our economic development," Shettima declared.

He said the initiative would mobilise government, investors, development partners and the private sector to turn the Niger Delta's agricultural potential into measurable economic progress.

Minister of Regional Development, Abubakar Momoh, urged investors to look beyond oil and gas, describing the region as "the powerhouse for food security in Nigeria".

He added that mechanised and innovative farming was the future, and that the Renewed Hope Agenda had placed agriculture at the heart of Nigeria's economic plan.

NDDC Board Chairman, Mr. Chiedu Ebie, said while the region was known as the home of oil and gas, it was also richly endowed with arable land.

"We remain guided by the eight presidential priorities of food security, poverty eradication and job creation. These serve as our roadmap to a prosperous Niger Delta," Ebie stated.

Moving forward, the Commission's Managing Director, Dr. Samuel Ogbuku, said the NDDC was committed to building infrastructure to support agriculture.

He, further, revealed that the 1.2km Kaa-Ataba Bridge linking Khana to Andoni LGA in Rivers State would soon be completed.

"The Niger Delta has for decades been known for oil, but it is time to unlock the enormous opportunities beneath its fertile soil. Agriculture offers the region a pathway to food security, employment and lasting prosperity," Ogbuku said.

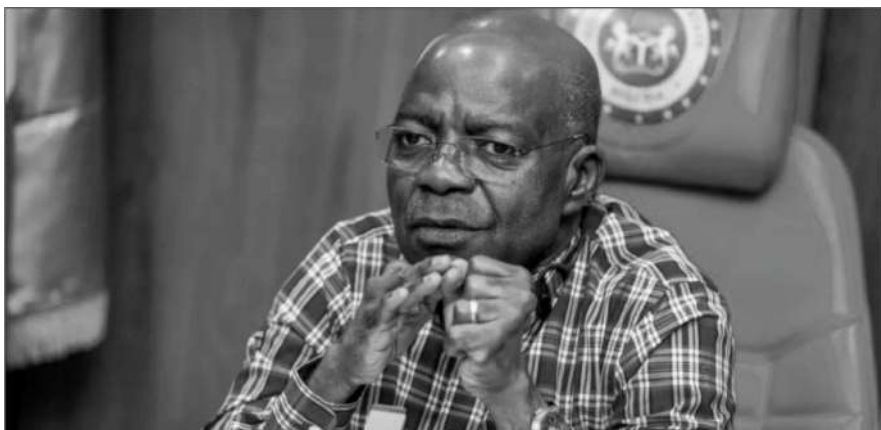
Moreso, Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Senator Abubakar Kyari, represented by Permanent Secretary Dr. Marcus Ogunbiyi, said transitioning from subsistence to mechanised farming was critical to achieving food security.

Responding, Keynote speaker, Prince S.J. Samuel, who spoke on "Niger Delta: Awakening an Agricultural Giant," also called for mechanised farming.

Akwa Ibom Governor, Pastor Umo Eno, represented his deputy Senator Akon Eyakenyi, commended NDDC and the VP's office for the summit, saying his state was committed to reviving agriculture.

NDDC Director of Agriculture and Fisheries, Dr. Winifred Madume, said the region had fertile land, freshwater, coastline and market access to drive crop production, aquaculture, livestock and agro-processing.

"This is not simply about growing more food. It is about building an agricultural economy that rewards investment and positions the Niger Delta as one of Nigeria's leading destinations for agribusiness," she said.



Gov, Otti

Otti Orders ASUBEB To Rehabilitate Aguiyi Ironsi's Alma Mater

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, has directed the Abia State Universal Basic Education Board (ASUBEB) to immediately start the process of rehabilitating Ibeama Primary School, Ndume Otuka, Umuahia North Local Government Area, the alma mater of Nigeria's first military Head of State, the late General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi.

The governor also directed the Commissioner for Works, Otumchere Oti, to assess the condition of the community road leading to the late General's residence with a view to rehabilitating it.

Otti gave the directives recently during a civic reception organised in honour of the Deputy Speaker of the Abia State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Austin Okezie Nmerigini, at Ibeama Primary School, Ndume Otuka.

The governor's directives followed appeals by leaders

of the Ndume Otuka community, who requested the rehabilitation of the historic primary school attended by Aguiyi-Ironsi and the access road to his residence.

Responding, Otti said the requests would be accommodated under his administration's ongoing programme of comprehensive rehabilitation of public schools across the state.

He said: "We have taken notes of the request that was made by the elder statesman.

"The first one is the road that leads to General Ironsi's house. I will detail the Commissioner for Works to go and have a look and come back to me.

"The second one is about the school. We are carrying out a comprehensive rehabilitation of all the schools in the state. And I believe that this is not left out. The chairman of the State Universal Basic Education Board is here.

"So she is hereby given an instruction to come back here by Monday and begin to look

at how we will fast track the rehabilitation of the school".

Governor Otti thanked the people of the area for acknowledging his administration's developmental efforts and for pledging support for him and Labour Party candidates in the 2027 general elections.

"Our promise to you is that we shall not stop; nothing will stop us. And with your promise to support all of us for the next election, all we want to say is thank you", the governor said.

He also commended the people of Umuahia East for organising a thanksgiving service in honour of their son, noting that the scriptures encourage gratitude to God.

Earlier, the President-General of the Ndume Otuka Development Union, Deacon Okezie Onyemauwa, and community elder, Chimezie Ndukwe, applauded the governor for the remarkable transformation taking place across Abia State.

They praised his people-oriented policies and developmental strides,

saying the administration had restored hope and confidence through impactful projects and good governance.

The community leaders also reaffirmed their support for the Otti led administration and drew his attention to the deteriorating condition of the road leading to the late Aguiyi-Ironsi's residence as well as the dilapidated state of Ibeama Primary School.

In his remarks, the Deputy Speaker, Rt. Hon. Austin Okezie Nmerigini, thanked the governor for attending the event despite his demanding schedule, describing his presence as a demonstration of genuine affection for the people.

Nmerigini said many of those who organised the reception had belonged to opposition parties during the 2023 elections but had since embraced Governor Otti's leadership because of the transformation witnessed across the state.

Ukwa East LP Youth Leaders Pledge Full Support To Party

By Okechukwu Ubani

The 10 Ward Youth Leaders of the Labour Party (LP) in Ukwa East Local Government Area of Abia State have reaffirmed their full support for Governor Alex Otti and all Labour Party candidates ahead of the 2027 elections.

The declaration was made during a meeting held at the Labour Party Secretariat in Akwete, Ukwa East. The meeting, chaired by the LGA Youth Leader, Princewill Nna Ugbor, focused on strengthening the party's structure and preparing members for the elections.

Addressing the

gathering, Ugbor urged all Ward Youth Leaders to work closely with their ward chairmen, stakeholders and other party leaders to keep the party united and attract more members across the 10 wards in the local government.

He stressed the need for teamwork, commitment and regular engagement with people at the grassroots, saying that a strong and united party would remain difficult to defeat at the polls.

Ugbor also appealed to the youth leaders to remain calm and continue supporting the government. He assured them that empowerment programmes,

grants for petty traders, palliatives and other government support would soon be extended to people across the local government.

Speaking during the meeting, the Youth Leader of Ikwoorior West Ward, Comrade Izunndu Moses Okpoko, expressed confidence in the Labour Party's popularity in Ukwa East. He said the people of the area remain firmly behind Governor Alex Otti and all Labour Party candidates.

According to him, the achievements of the Otti administration have continued to win the confidence of residents,

placing the party in a strong position ahead of the elections.

At the end of the meeting, the 10 Ward Youth Leaders unanimously resolved to begin massive grassroots mobilisation across all communities in Ukwa East. They pledged to work tirelessly to ensure the Labour Party records victory in all elective positions.

The youth leaders also praised Governor Otti for his commitment to transparency, good governance and the development of Abia State. They said his administration has restored hope to the people through projects and policies that are improving lives across the state.

ABIA STATE COLLEGE OF NURSING SCIENCES

AMACHARA, ABA, ABIRIBA, UMUHIA & UMUNNATO

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 Website: <https://abscons.org>
 Phone No.: 0903 936 9186



ADMISSION! ADMISSION!! ADMISSION!!!

The management of Abia State College of Nursing Sciences hereby announces the commencement of admission into its **National Diploma (ND) Nursing Programme** for the **2026/2027 Academic Session** at both the **Amachara Campus** and the **Aba Campus**.

Interested candidates who participated in the **2026 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME)** and scored 170 and above are advised to carry out a **Change of Institution** on the JAMB CAPS and select **Abia State College of Nursing Sciences** as their First Choice Institution.

Applicants must possess a minimum of **five (5) credit passes** in **WAEC, NECO, or NABTEB**, including **English Language, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, and Physics**, obtained at not more than **two sittings**. Candidates must also be **at least sixteen (16) years old by September 2026**.

For further enquiries: abscons.abia@abiastate.gov.ng or visit the college admin block at Amachara.

Important Notice:

The College has not authorized any individual, group, or organization to act as an admission agent on its behalf. Therefore, anyone dealing with any person other than through the official contact provided above does so entirely at his or her own risk.

Beware of fraudsters.

Signed:

Management

Abia State College of Nursing Sciences – Nurturing the Caring Hands.

Photos Speak



L-R: Team Lead and representative of the investors, Dr. Oko Jaja and Chief Executive Officer of MD NWAKANMA NIGERIA Limited, Mr. Dennis Madu Nwakamma, as Gov Alex Otti received investors, led by their Team Lead, Dr. Oko Jaja, in his office.



L-R: Gov Alex Otti of Abia State and Chairman of the occasion, Chief Chibuike Achigbu, during the grand civic reception organised by the Imo indigenes resident in Abia State under the aegis of Ndi Imo in Abia, in honour of Gov Otti and his wife, Mrs Priscilla Otti at Aba.



L-R: Gov Alex Otti of Abia State and The Leader of the delegation, who is also an Assistant Commandant General, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Dr Umannah Samuel Amadi, as Abia Gov received a delegation from the National Safe School Integrated Command and Intelligence System, led by its National Commander, Dr. Umannah Samuel Amadi in his office.



From left: The Emir of Kano, Prof. Sanusi Lamido Sanusi; the Governor of Abia State, Dr. Alex Otti; Prof. Barth Nnaji; and other distinguished guests prepare to cut the birthday cake during Prof. Nnaji's 70th birthday celebration at the International Conference Centre, Enugu, recently.



Members of the victorious Abia State Para Badminton Team being welcomed in Umuahia by the Commissioner for Youth and Sports Development, Hon. Nwaobilor Ananaba, following their successful participation in the 2026 Uganda Para Badminton International Championship held recently in Kampala, Uganda.



From right: General Manager of the Abia Newspapers and Publishing Corporation, Hon. Jones Nnenna Ike (1st right); the Honourable Commissioner for Youth and Sports Development (2nd left); and the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, Pastor Jane Igwa, as the Commissioner received the victorious Abia State Para Badminton Team in his office following their successful participation at the 2026 Uganda Para Badminton International Championship held in Kampala, Uganda, recently.



Abia State Government

Ministry of Power and Public Utilities

Ref: MPPU/AD/013/II/

17th July, 2026

INVITATION TO BID FOR PROCUREMENT, SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF EXPANDED EV CHARGING STATION OSISIOMA AT AFROBEV – ABA AND ICC UMUAHIA

The Abia State Government, through the Ministry of Power and Public Umuahia, invites qualified and experienced companies to submit technical and financial bids for the Supply and Installation of Expanded EV Charging Station Osisioma at Afrobev – Aba and ICC Umuahia.

PROJECT SCOPE

The scope of work encompasses the entire EV Charging Batteries and Electrical Installation and Construction, including but not limited to the following:

Description	QTY
300mm of 300mm ² single Core Armoured cable	300
70mm ² bare copper conductor	120
Heavy duty galvanized earth rod	10
300mm ² cable log	16
70mm ² cable log	10
Rolls crocoite tape	2
9" PVC Pipe	6
Logistics and Labour	1
Diesel-Afro Bev	1
Diesel-ICC	1
Construction of EV Chargers Canopy	2
TOTAL	

RFQ REQUIREMENTS

Company/vendors must submit their bids in two separate sealed envelopes (Technical and Financial) and hard copies
The Technical Bid must include:

- **Company Profile:** Proof of registration with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and registration with Abia State Government and valid Engineering Licenses (COREN, NEMSA etc) and payment of Tender Fee.
- **Experience:** Verifiable track record of similar power projects completed within the last three [3] years.
- **Method Statement:** Proposed project timeline (A clear project timeline - Gantt chart), work methodology, Bill of Quantities, Drawing or Technical Design.
- Copy of the completed financial template (See below).
- **Financial Capability:** Audited financial statements for the past 3 years.

SITE INSPECTION

A mandatory site visit and pre-bid meeting will be scheduled three (3) days from the date of publication.

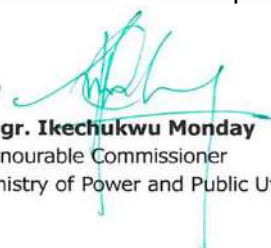
SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

All proposals must be submitted in a sealed envelopes addressed to:

The Honourable Commissioner,
Ministry of Power and Public Utilities,
P.M.B 7226, Umuahia,
Abia State.

The Completed proposal must reach the Planning, Research and Statistics Department of the ministry within fourteen (14) days from the date of this publication.

Thank you.


Engr. Ikechukwu Monday
Honourable Commissioner
Ministry of Power and Public Utilities

News

SSG Advises Christian Professionals To Be Agents Of Positive Change

By Ndubueze Ngozi

The Secretary to the Abia State Government (SSG), Dr. Emmanuel Meribole, has urged members of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International (FGBMI), Nigeria, Umuahia South Zone, to see themselves as role models by making positive impacts in the lives of others and their communities.

Dr. Meribole gave the charge while speaking at the Fellowship's breakfast meeting held at Platter Grilltz, Azikiwe Road, Umuahia. He expressed appreciation to the Fellowship for the warm reception accorded him and said he looked forward to participating in more of its programmes.

The SSG noted that Jesus Christ, during His earthly ministry, transformed lives through love, compassion and selfless service, urging Christians to emulate His example in their daily lives.

He added that everyone has a testimony of God's goodness and stressed the importance of acknowledging God in all endeavours, emphasizing that lasting success can only be achieved through Him.

Also speaking, the Commissioner for Health, Prof. Enoch Uche, underscored the need for genuine love among people, noting that true promotion and elevation come from God.

Earlier in his welcome address, a member of the Fellowship, Mr. Victor Mbanaso, explained that the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International is a non-profit Christian organisation that brings together business and professional men to share the new life they have found in Christ while promoting Christian fellowship and networking.

He disclosed that the Fellowship, founded in the 1950s, has grown to 167 chapters across Nigeria.

The breakfast meeting featured inspiring testimonies from members, including the Vice-Chancellor of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Prof. Ursula Akanwa, and Dr. Zikikeorha, among others. The event attracted politicians, legal practitioners, medical experts, business leaders and other distinguished guests.

Otti's Security Investments, Driving Investors Confidence In Abia - Ukoha

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru and Stephanie Adindu

The General Manager/Chief Executive Officer of the Abia State Homeland Security Agency, Col. Chidi Kalu Ukoha (Retd), has attributed the growing confidence of investors and the resurgence of economic activities in Abia State to Governor Alex Chioma Otti's deliberate investment in security.

Ukoha said the improved security architecture under the present administration has transformed Abia into one of the safest states in Nigeria, creating an enabling environment for businesses to thrive and attracting both local and foreign investors.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with the National Ambassador Newspapers recently, the retired military officer described the restoration of public confidence as the agency's greatest achievement, noting that increased business activities and the steady influx of investors are clear evidence that the state's security strategy is yielding positive results.

"The greatest achievement of the agency is the confidence citizens now have in the security of the state. Business activities have improved,



Col. Chidi Kalu Ukoha (Retd),

more investors are coming into Abia, and many people now regard the state as one of the safest in the South-East," he said.

He credited the feat to Governor Otti's commitment to strengthening security through sustained funding, provision of operational equipment, personnel training and enhanced collaboration among security agencies.

"The governor understands that security is the foundation of development. His administration has remained intentional in providing the support needed to secure lives, property and investments," Ukoha

stated.

He also commended officers of the Homeland Security Agency for their professionalism and praised residents for embracing the principle that security is everyone's responsibility.

According to him, intelligence supplied by members of the public has also contributed significantly to the arrest of criminal suspects, including cultists and kidnappers.

Ukoha identified cultism, kidnapping, child trafficking and drug abuse as the major security challenges confronting the state, describing drug abuse as a key driver of violent crimes.

He said the agency has intensified collaboration with the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in raiding drug dens and dismantling criminal networks across the state.

On clashes involving herders and host communities, he reiterated that Abia maintains zero tolerance for open grazing, warning that anyone found violating the law would face arrest, while offending cattle could be impounded.

The Homeland Security boss disclosed that the state government is expanding security infrastructure and strengthening emergency response capacity to

improve operational efficiency.

He revealed that the agency's emergency call centre is being upgraded to reduce response time to distress calls to less than five minutes.

Ukoha maintained that improved security has revived struggling businesses, encouraged new investments and increased the influx of residents into the state.

He said, "Abia under Governor Alex Otti is safe and Abia is ready for business".

On the proposed establishment of State Police, he expressed support for the initiative, describing community policing as a practical response to Nigeria's security challenges, while stressing the need for a clear legal framework to prevent abuse.

Ahead of the 2027 general elections, Ukoha assured political parties and residents that the Homeland Security Agency would remain neutral and professional.

"We are completely apolitical. We know no political party and no candidate. Our responsibility is to maintain peace, protect lives and property, and ensure a secure environment throughout the electoral process," he said.

Abia Govt Moves To Check Erosion At Emede Ibeku, Amaba Uzuakoli

By Ofor Okechukwu

The Abia State Commissioner for Environment, Mr Philemon Ogbonna has said that steps are being taken for intervention work on Emede Ibeku Gully.

The commissioner, who disclosed this, while on an inspection tour to the gully site alongside the State project co-ordinator of Newmap advised those living around the gully to vacate to avoid loss of life. He noted that the gully could be recovered immediately work started on the site, whereas any life lost due to the gully cannot be recovered.

He described the present administration as one that listens to the cry of the people, and expressed optimism that in no distant time intervention work will commence in the area.

Responding on behalf of the community, Chief Innocent Iheukwumere thanked the commissioner and his team for the visit and appealed for an urgent intervention on the gully site.

Meanwhile, government said it had captured and prioritized the Amaewu Amaba Uzuakoli erosion site for rehabilitation under the Newmap project.

The Commissioner for Environment, who disclosed this when he

visited the site alongside the project coordinator, Abia State Newmap said the state government is concerned about the gully. He added adding that government will go back with the engineers to see how interim measures could be applied.

Ogbonna noted that the present administration, since assumption of office, had rehabilitated many gully erosion sites. He stressed that the challenge in Amaewu Amaba is not new to the state government. He blamed the gully on improper termination of drainages, and indiscriminate dumping of refuse at the site.

The commissioner, who also inspected the Dadds Methodist Church, Uzuakoli, erosion site said the site has also been captured and designed by the Newmap as a priority site for rehabilitation. He noted that the Dr Alex Otti-led administration is a government that gives priority to issues that affect the people.

Also speaking, the President-General, Ohabike Amambauzuakoli, Mr Nelson Umezurike, said the gully which started in 2019, has been a nightmare to the community, while the community has through community efforts spent

millions of naira on the site to no avail.

He thanked the commissioner and project co-ordinator, Newmap, for the visit and expressed optimism that immediate action will be taken.

Speaking on behalf of the elders of the community, Chief Okorie Okeasu, who acknowledged the developmental strides of the present administration, saying the community has benefited in road construction and rehabilitation, electricity and renovations of schools and appealed for urgent action on the gully.

The commissioner was accompanied on the inspection by a team of engineers from the Newmap and the Ministry of Environment.

Focus

The PFIPC Scandal And The Urgent Reforms Required

By Tunde Rahman

When Prince Adeniyi Adeyemi Matthew walked into Phase III Section of the Federal Secretariat in Abuja with a forged letter and emerged with an office, signage, and a semblance of government legitimacy, he did not act alone.

That is the uncomfortable truth of the "Presidential Foreign Intervention Promotion Council" saga. Adeyemi has been charged with eight counts of fraud and forgery. But the bigger scandal is not one man's alleged audacity. It is how a non-existent agency got close to N1.3bn in the 2026 budget, secured office space in the heart of government, hosted top government functionaries from Nigeria and abroad, and allegedly operated multiple accounts.

This is not a story about Chief of Staff Femi Gbajabiamila versus Prince Adeyemi. This is a story about systemic failure. And until the system is properly fixed, it is quite probable that the next Adeyemi is somewhere forging another letterhead.

There are several systemic breaches in the saga that public finance analysts and other commentators have already pointed out, but they nonetheless require restating. There is a failure of due diligence in budgeting. The 2026 Appropriation Act contained N1.3bn for the "Presidential Economic Advisory Council/PFIPC".

The problem, however, is that PFIPC has no legal backing and was never established by the Federal Government.

Top sources in the National Assembly claim the allocation entered "through a backdoor arrangement" without budget defence. For whatever his statement is worth, Adeyemi, in his interview with social media influencer, VeryDarkMan, from his hideout, said he was detained for 23 days while the budget was being prepared. "I did not prepare or defend any budget, and nobody went to defend it on my behalf," he said. That means the appropriation to the fake agency bypassed the committees that should have asked probing questions such as: "Which agency is this?" What is its mandate? Who are its staff members?

Since the rebirth of democracy over 27 years ago, Nigeria's budget process has been criticised for "insertions" and "undue inflation". PFIPC is now the clearest example of

why that matters. A ghost agency should not be able to get real money. If the Budget Office, House of Representatives, and Senate all missed this, our first line of fiscal defence needs a long, hard look.

There is also the issue of appointment and office verification. Adeyemi allegedly used a forged appointment letter bearing Gbajabiamila's purported signature and counterfeit presidential letterhead to present himself as DG. Gbajabiamila's lawyers insist he has "never had any contact whatsoever with Adeyemi". Yet somehow, that letter was "accepted at the civil service headquarters without adequate verification". It secured him an office in the Federal Secretariat for over a year. Up until this month, a sign for PFIPC was still up, directing visitors to the "council's purported office" inside the Ministry of Health wing.

Just think about that. The administrative hub of the Federal Civil Service could not detect a fake appointment. If letterheads and signatures of top government functionaries are that easy to forge and accept, then no MDA is safe. Tomorrow, it could be a fake NCC or NDCC director. And next week, possibly a fake university VC.

The third system failure is about banking and due diligence. Adeyemi allegedly opened an account with the Central Bank of Nigeria for the non-existent agency. Adeyemi himself asked the most damning question in a viral video: "The same acclaimed non-existent agency has a domiciliary account, a pounds sterling account and a Treasury Single Account, all domiciled in the Central Bank of Nigeria. Is it even possible to open an account with fictitious documents in a commercial bank in Nigeria today, let alone at the CBN?"

He also allegedly operated 34 bank accounts linked to fictitious agencies. Banks and government revenue platforms are required by law to conduct a KYC (know your customer) check. How did 34 accounts get opened? Who approved the TSA linkage? The EFCC has recovered items and made arrests, but the institutions that enabled the financial plumbing have not been named.

But how does the Chief of Staff come into all of this? Where does he fit into, for the life of me? Adeyemi alleged that Gbajabiamila demanded 48% of a N27.4bn take-off grant and collected N400m through proxies.

Gbajabiamila says he has never met Adeyemi in his life and

no proxy has acted on his behalf. His lawyers call the allegations "false and gravely defamatory" and have slammed a N10bn suit on Adeyemi. Adeyemi himself admitted in the VDM interview that he never met Gbajabiamila.

Truth is, Gbajabiamila's office does not issue appointments. Presidential Spokesman Bayo Onanuga had pointed out that much in a statement. The matter of appointment is the prerogative of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, which is the clearing house for all appointments made by the President. Even then, the CoS's letterhead and signature were also found to have been forged.

It was the Office of the CoS that first "blew the whistle" about the fake agency after the Nigeria Investment Promotion Council flagged it. Gbajabiamila caused a disclaimer to be placed on Adeyemi following which he was arrested by the police and arraigned in court.

It is instructive that President Bola Tinubu has directed the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Offences Commission to investigate the entire scandal. That is a commendable step. The President also did not leave the duration of the investigation open-ended; he ordered that the probe be concluded within a month. It was also gathered that KPMG may be brought in if there are larger accounting issues to untangle.

Also, whereas the House of Representatives has elected to launch its own investigations into the matter, the Senate has suspended its own probe, rightfully backing the President's action.

My point is that the investigation and the legal process must run their course. The CoS should not be guillotined, literally. There should be a presumption of innocence until he is proven guilty.

But the more important point is this: even if every allegation against the CoS is false, as it appears to be, the fact that his name and signature could be forged, and used to access government property still suggests some vulnerability in the administrative controls.

All of that has made a reform of the system imperative.

Arresting Adeyemi so he can answer for his serious misdeeds is necessary. However, that would not be sufficient. Stopping there would be akin to treating malaria with paracetamol.

Opinion

Bridges Beyond Borders: Governor Alex Otti's Recipe For A Prosperous World.

By Christian Uche Anokwuru, Ph.D

When I sat quietly in the serene conference hall in the University of Northampton in the U.K. a few days ago to listen to Governor Alex Otti of Abia State of Nigeria deliver a lecture during the institution's annual conference on the meaning of racial harmony and international development which always revolved around the same topic of racial justice at all times, I was able to follow our governor's interpretation of global justice, leadership transparency, social justice and other strong issues raised in the governor's well grounded presentation and civilized arguments.

I, in fact, appreciated our dear governor the more alongside all other attendees who were equally deeply moved by the man's deep insight and intelligent scholarship. I hereby present my unadulterated interpretation of what I heard our governor imply. In the presence of people from different continents gathered in a hall where different languages, cultures and skin colours blended into one human family. People who came carrying different histories, some marked by privilege, others by struggle, but all searching for the same answer: How can humanity build a world where no one is judged by race, birthplace or social status, but by character, compassion and contribution?

The answer did not begin with politics. It began with a simple truth: every human being possesses equal dignity.

The strongest societies are not those that build the highest walls, but those that build the strongest bridges. Walls create fear, suspicion and isolation. Bridges create understanding, cooperation and shared prosperity. Every bridge begins with a conversation, grows through trust and becomes permanent through justice.

In such a world, racial diversity is not a weakness but a treasure. Black, White, Asian, Arab, Indigenous and mixed-race communities are not competitors in the struggle for opportunity; they are partners in humanity's shared journey. Different cultures enrich civilisation just as different instruments create a beautiful orchestra.

Human rights become meaningful only when they are

experienced in everyday life. A child should never be denied quality education because of ethnicity. A young graduate should not lose employment because of the colour of their skin. A woman should not be excluded from leadership because of prejudice. A refugee should not be stripped of dignity because of circumstance. Justice begins when opportunity belongs to everyone.

Economic justice follows the same principle. Prosperity should not remain the privilege of a few while millions are trapped in poverty. A fair society rewards hard work, innovation and integrity instead of discrimination, corruption or inherited advantage. When governments create transparent institutions, businesses invest with confidence, entrepreneurs create jobs and families discover hope. Economic growth then becomes more than statistics; it becomes food on tables, schools for children, hospitals for communities and security for the vulnerable.

Yet laws alone cannot transform society. Transformation begins in the human heart. It requires leaders who inspire rather than divide, teachers who educate rather than indoctrinate, journalists who seek truth rather than conflict, religious leaders who preach reconciliation rather than hatred, and citizens who choose understanding over stereotypes.

Dialogue is stronger than accusation. Listening is more powerful than shouting. Example is more convincing than ideology. Lasting social change is built not by humiliating opponents but by inviting them into a shared vision of justice.

History reminds us that nations flourish whenever they embrace inclusion. Every great civilisation has drawn strength from people of different backgrounds working together. Innovation grows where talent is welcomed. Peace grows where fairness is protected. Democracy grows where every voice matters.

The world therefore needs a new social contract founded upon equal opportunity. Every child, whether born in Lagos, London, Mumbai, São Paulo, Nairobi or New York, deserves access to education, healthcare,

security and the freedom to dream. Human potential has no racial identity. Excellence belongs to those who prepare, persevere and remain committed to continuous learning.

Preparation is one of life's greatest equalisers. Long before recognition arrives, discipline is quietly shaping tomorrow's leaders. The unknown student studying late into the night may become tomorrow's scientist. The unnoticed volunteer may become tomorrow's humanitarian. The young entrepreneur struggling today may create industries that employ thousands tomorrow. Greatness often begins before the world notices.

This truth offers hope to every generation. No one should believe that their background determines their future. Poverty is not destiny. Race is not limitation. Geography is not imprisonment. With education, opportunity, ethical leadership and determination, individuals and nations can rewrite their stories.

The future the world longs for is neither Black nor White, Eastern nor Western. It is a future where justice walks alongside mercy, where economic progress includes the poor, where diversity strengthens unity and where leadership is measured by service rather than power.

When humanity chooses bridges over walls, dialogue over division, competence over prejudice and justice over privilege, society moves closer to its highest ideals. In that world, human rights are protected, economies become more inclusive, opportunities are shared fairly and peace becomes more than a dream.

Such a future is not beyond our reach. It begins whenever ordinary people decide to treat one another as equals, whenever leaders govern with integrity, and whenever communities choose cooperation over conflict.

For in the end, our greatest identity is not our race, nationality or religion. It is our common humanity. And when humanity stands together, there are no strangers, only neighbours working side by side to build a just, prosperous and compassionate world. I truly cannot thank Governor Alex Otti enough for the dexterity and candour with which he discharged his onerous duties at all times. God bless you Sir.

News

NSCDC Debunks Allegations Of Fraud

From Lovina Emole

Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, NSCDC, Akwa Ibom State Command, has dismissed the media reports of being involved in financial impropriety, economic sabotage as well as having strained relationship with other security agencies in the state.

The State Commandant, Geraldine Abetianbe has been accused of being complicit to financial misconduct in the command and victimization of staff among other allegations.

In a statement by the command's Public Relations Officer, SC Friday Ekerete recently, the command described those allegations as false, malicious and figment of the writer's imagination.

On alleged financial impropriety over staff welfare scheme, the PRO said the scheme in question existed before the Commandant's assumption of office in December, 2025, saying, "since it was about staff welfare, it was expanded to include all personnel through a unanimous decision taken by all at a muster parade held at the State Command Headquarters.

This was followed by the appointment of an EXCO comprising representatives of all ranks/levels right at the parade ground. Deductions were made from all staff, including the State Commandant.

However, as soon as implementation of the scheme started, some members kicked against it and refunds were made instantly and the scheme abolished."

The Spokesperson also dismissed the allegation that the command had refused to distribute tech operational system packs and drones it received, saying that they would only be disbursed for use after resource persons from the National Headquarters have successfully trained personnel on how to operate them, especially to enhance security operations.

"Since they are systems configured for security use, due process is being followed in line with Corps policy in this regard," he added.

Ekerete also wondered how allegations of victimization and appointment bias would come in, saying that NSCDC is a federal organization and personnel deployment reflects the federal character principle. He stressed that strategic positions like Head of Anti-Vandal, Operations, PGC, Solid Minerals, Store, 2iC of the Command, Medical, Armoury and so on at the State Command Headquarters are all occupied by qualified and competent Akwa Ibomites.

Abia Govt Intensifies Crackdown On Sexual Violence, As 2 Child Sex Offenders Jailed

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

In a major breakthrough in its campaign against sexual and gender-based violence, the Abia State Government has secured the conviction of two child sex offenders, who were sentenced to 30 and 10 years' imprisonment respectively, for separate cases of defilement.

One of the offenders, a 35-year-old man from Akwa Ibom State, was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment by a Family Court sitting at the High Court in Umuahia, for defiling a five-year-old girl while another 32-year-old man received a 30-year prison sentence after being convicted of defiling a 13-year-old girl.

The Commissioner for Information, Prince Okey Kanu disclosed this at Government House Umuahia, recently while briefing Journalists on the outcome of the previous State Executive Council Meeting presided over by Governor Alex Otti.

Prince Kanu said the convictions underscore the present administration's zero-tolerance policy towards sexual offences and serve as a warning that perpetrators would not be spared.

"Two sexual assault cases were successfully concluded recently resulting in convictions and prison sentences of 30 and 10 years, respectively.

"These are landmark convictions that indicate that Abia State



Commissioner For Information, Prince Okey Kanu

Government has zero tolerance for sexual assault on women folk", the commissioner said.

He also disclosed that the convictions were among landmark outcomes recorded by the state's Nchedo Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), located at the General Hospital, Aba.

Prince Kanu disclosed that the centre had continued to provide coordinated medical, psychosocial and referral services to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

The Commissioner further revealed that the facility is currently managing two fresh cases involving a 60-year-old woman allegedly subjected to gang rape and a five-year-old child who survived defilement.

He added that the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection has continued to implement the state's social

protection framework by identifying and supporting vulnerable residents that require urgent medical and humanitarian assistance.

Prince Kanu disclosed that the ministry recently visited the family of the late Wendy Achumba, an indigent from Obingwa Local Government Area who was allegedly raped and murdered in Imo State.

According to him, government officials attended her burial in solidarity with the bereaved family, provided financial support and pledged to pursue justice in the case.

Providing further details of the convictions, the Commissioner for Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection, Mrs Ngozi Felix, said one of the offenders, a 35-year-old man, was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for defiling a five-year-old girl.

Mrs Felix said the suspect had fled to Nasarawa State after the

incident but was tracked down and returned to Abia by the police to face prosecution.

She further disclosed that another 32-year-old man received a 30-year prison sentence after being convicted of defiling a 13-year-old girl by the Family Court sitting at the High Court in Umuahia.

The commissioner described the recent conviction process as one of the fastest recorded within Nigeria's network of Sexual Assault Referral Centres, adding that: "We've not had a case called up on the first day in court for the hearing, and that same sentence happened.

"This is the fastest that has ever happened in the country. We have a network of sexual assault referral centers in Nigeria, and this is the fastest that has ever happened, that conviction was given within 24 hours.

"The hearing was called up on the 9th of July,

Thursday, and on that same 9th of July he was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment", Mrs Felix said.

Felix attributed the development to collaboration among the Ministries of Health, Justice, Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, as well as the Nigeria Police Force.

She also commended the Abia State Commissioner of Police, Danladi Isa, for the command's support in the investigation and prosecution of sexual violence cases.

The commissioner noted that the Otti led administration remains committed to protecting vulnerable residents and warned sternly that sexual offenders would face the full weight of the law.

"Under this administration, you know, the government is very serious and has zero tolerance for any form of sexual and gender-based abuse for vulnerable citizens.

"Vulnerable citizens are receiving the utmost care, protection from this administration. So I'd like to use this opportunity to also send a warning message to sexual offenders.

"We have a sex offenders register at the Ministry of Justice for naming and shaming of sexual offenders. Once somebody is convicted, his/her name is there. This register serves as a deterrent for those who may be potential offenders in the future", Mrs. Felix said.

Stakeholders Advocate For One-Stop Registration Hub For CSOs In Akwa Ibom

From Lovina Emole

Civil society leaders, media executives, and governance stakeholders in Akwa Ibom State have called for the establishment of Civil Society Organization (CSO) Registry under the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs.

They stated that the registry must stand as a singular and absolute point of entry for CSO registration in the State as proposed in the draft bill.

This was part of the resolutions taken at the end of the CoP's Civic Space Strengthening on

CSO Registration Bill, 2026 which was organized in partnership with Global Rights in Uyo, Akwa Ibom capital recently.

The stakeholders therefore, called for the immediate and total abolition of parallel registration layers and duplicate local levies presently imposed by conflicting Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) in the state.

They regretted that fragmented regime had for too long taxed civil society's time, resources, and goodwill.

The communiqué in

parts, "Stakeholders unanimously endorsed the establishment of the Akwa Ibom State CSO Registry under the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs as proposed in the draft bill emphasising that the registry must stand as the singular, absolute point of entry for CSO registration in the State."

The stakeholders also stated that the proposed five-member registry board must remain watertight against political capture noting that Civil society's democratic right to independently nominate its three

representatives is inviolable and must be protected in the final text of the bill.

"All five board members must hold strictly equal voting weight, with no member or bloc afforded outsized influence as this parity is the bedrock guarantee against future manipulation of the registry for political ends.

"We demand that qualification criteria for civil society nominees be raised to a minimum of ten (10) years of direct sector experience as a matching, without discount or

exception, the benchmark demanded of the State registrar". They added.

Stakeholders further applauded the digital registration and document exchange Bill for CSOs, saying that such move would engender transparency and accountability among government officials.

They, however, charged the media to deploy a relentless and sustained advocacy compelling the Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly to prioritize, expedite, and pass "this landmark constituency bill into law without further delay".

Feature

Nobody Needs NYSC Reform

By Reuben Abati

Peter F. Drucker, the Austrian-American management guru (1909-2005), opined that change is an inevitable constant in human situations and that innovation is important in the 21st Century where skills become obsolete at the speed of light and what was deemed essential yesterday sooner or later becomes irrelevant, requiring new thinking, new styles, new modes to remain relevant and to gain new knowledge. But the proposed plan by the Federal Government of Nigeria to reform the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme does not fit into this pattern. It is a classic case of majoring in the minors, a misplaced priority, a wasteful adventure whose long-term subliminal objective may be mere self-enrichment that would not change much but rather cause unwanted confusion.

The Bola Ahmed Tinubu administration has advertised itself as a reform-minded administration. But certain reforms do not come across as a priority and this NYSC reform is one of such thoughtless propositions like, if we may cite an earlier example, the decision to revert to the old Nigerian National Anthem. I watch people at public events, they sing along most reluctantly because there was no consensus nor has there been any buy-in, that Nigeria needed to change its National Anthem. It is important that policies are not enacted or revised simply to satisfy the personal fancy or the whims of anyone no matter how highly placed. In the case of the NYSC, nobody was consulted. We woke up one morning only to be told by the Minister of State for Youth Development, Ayodele Olawande that a decision had been taken to reform the NYSC programme. Nobody needs NYSC reform.

The NYSC is 53 years old. Established in May 1973, by the Yakubu Gowon military administration, it was a post-civil war measure in pursuit of the objectives of the three Rs: Reconciliation, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction, to reintegrate Nigerians and reunite them and heal the wounds of the civil war. The fratricidal war divided Nigeria and watered the seeds of ethnicity and difference. Over 50 years later, the wounds are yet to heal. The NYSC was an attempt at reconciliation. It started with the posting of graduates of tertiary institutions to cities and states far away from their homes, and places of graduation, to allow them live among other people, get to understand Nigeria and learn to serve Nigeria selflessly. The emphasis was on service. When the late sage, Chinua Achebe wrote that "there was once a country", the NYSC was part of that effort at the making and remaking of Nigeria. It is the case that when the country began to fail on all fronts in terms of security, institutional integrity, increased ethnic and religious division, a group of Nigerians began to agitate that the NYSC was no longer serving its purpose and it should be scrapped. Except that the problem is not with the scheme but the Nigerian factor: the inbred tendency by those in charge to minimize every good thing and ruin it. It is instructive that the Tinubu administration is not contemplating an abandonment of the scheme. Apart from the fact that this would be a disservice to the father of the NYSC, General Yakubu Gowon, who is still alive, it would amount to an unconscionable erosion of a significant aspect of collective public memory. Those who participated in the scheme in the earlier days have fond memories.

On Saturday, during a radio programme, Professor Seun Omatoya, a Professor of Sports Psychology, currently based in Ghana, recalled that when he completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Ibadan, he was posted for National Service in Ogun State. He was not

happy that he was being sent to his home state. He personally went to the NYSC office in Lagos, and asked to be posted to the Northern part of Nigeria. I doubt if anyone would request for such a change of posting these days. On Sunday, I had a conversation on the NYSC with Emeritus Professor Duro Oni of the University of Lagos in the course of which he held the view that the NYSC remains relevant to Nigeria's growth and development. The NYSC gave him his wife. He met her when she came to participate in the scheme in Lagos. Today, the woman from Ojoja in Cross River state has given him four sons and six grandchildren. "I probably would never have met her if there was no NYSC." There are many Nigerians who have a similar experience: inter-ethnic marriages being one of the gains of the NYSC. Those who would probably never have left their home towns discovered Nigeria through the eyes and experience of other Nigerians and communities. Life-long friendships have been formed over the years. I know Chief Shadrack Akolokuwa from Omoku-Ogba in Rivers State, for



Bola Ahmed Tinubu

example. I was a young secondary student when he came to serve Nigeria in Abeokuta, Ogun State. He was so much part of the community. He and I have remained in touch over the years. The last time I saw him in Port Harcourt, he was asking after everybody in the neighbourhood, mentioning each person's name as if he left Abeokuta yesterday and it has been over 45 years since he participated in the NYSC. My service year was spent in Benin City, old Bendel state. A few years ago, I found myself in Benin, I quickly asked the driver to take me to the compound where I lived. I also went to the Department where I was a graduate assistant at the University of Benin, reliving old memories. I find it shocking therefore that one of the reforms being proposed by the Tinubu administration is that corps members may not be posted to conflict areas where insecurity may be a challenge, to ensure safety and reduce the anxiety of parents. Only indigenes of those areas or graduates of schools in such locations would be sent there. This defeats the fundamental objective of the NYSC: to promote unity and open up Nigeria unto its young persons. And who the hell came up with the twisted logic that graduates and indigenes from conflict zones are better off in those zones? Every life is important. No Nigerian, whether a graduate or not, should be exposed to danger. It is the duty of government to address the challenge of insecurity and make every part of Nigeria safe for all.

Minister Olawande also said the NYSC

uniform will be changed although a final decision on this has not yet been taken. But the government is considering Ankara or the adire batik fabric. The idea is to promote locally made fabrics and support the Nigerian textile industry. I dare say that there is nothing wrong with the current NYSC uniform. The khaki fabric and the vest are more durable than either Ankara or adire that would start fading, or get torn within a short while. The proposal is also likely to evoke ethnic comparison and sentiments. Adire batik is largely produced in the South Western part of the country, made for the most part in Ogun, Osun and Kwara states. It may be dismissed as an opportunity to create business for only one part of the country. Igbo are likely to demand that the ishiagu should also become part of the NYSC uniform. Northerners are likely to ask for babanriga in the spirit of Federal Character. Other ethnic nationalities may also make a case for their own local attires. Nobody needs such confusion. What can be done is to improve the quality of the present uniform. In our time, the khaki had better

may have unwittingly been training potential coup plotters. The so-called streams actually exist. In our time, corps members were assigned to specific responsibilities: persons who manned the kitchen prepared the meals and served others, some corps members served as Platoon commanders while everyone marched, we had press club, drama club and it all worked out smoothly. Part of the reform is to place the NYSC under civilian leadership. Under the present arrangement, the Director General may be from the Education Corps of the Nigerian military but at the state level, the NYSC secretariats are manned by civilians, and so changing the headship of the scheme will not make much difference as long as standards are maintained. Military

What the Federal Government needs to do is to make the NYSC experience richer and more exciting for those who participate in it. The monthly allowance for corps members should be increased, feeding at the orientation camps should be improved upon. Scrap the monthly Community Development exercises. Ensure that the orientation camps are properly secured to eliminate the risk of bandits and terrorists attacking those camps to kidnap corps members. Corps members should be deployed to places of primary assignment relevant to their fields of study. There is no point changing from passing out parade to graduation ceremony. Will corps members now wear graduation gowns? That is not necessary. Will the proposed reforms modernize the NYSC? No. Will they improve employability? I don't think so.

There are far more important and urgent issues that the Federal Government should be concerned about at this moment. One, the terribly embarrassing disclosure that a certain Prince Adeniyi Adeyemi Matthew set up a fake Presidential Agency – the Presidential Foreign Intervention Promotion Council (PFIPC) and Presidential Economic Advisory Council (PEAC) – which the Presidency now disclaims as a scam operation, and yet the said Prince had been operating openly – meeting with key government officials, receiving ambassadors in audience, and running an office at the Federal Secretariat that was duly allocated to him by the Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation. He has over 300 staff including Directors who are all on government payroll. His fake agency even got N1.3 billion allocation in the 2026 Budget. He runs 39 bank accounts and even has accounts with the Central Bank of Nigeria. He has since been charged to court, and his matter comes up on July 27. The man is in no way apologetic. He says he has a letter of appointment and that he paid N600 million to the President's Chief of Staff, Rt. Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila, to get appointed. Trouble started when his sponsor wanted a lion share of the budgetary allocation to his office. He says one Babatunde Tanimola facilitated his appointment but now the Tanimola died in a hotel room in Abuja just before he, Adeniyi was arrested in November 2025. Indeed, who knows tomorrow?

What we know today is the spectacle before us: a spectacle of institutional failure, incompetence, collusion, corruption and the failure of due process. If it is possible to manufacture a non-existent government agency, and operate openly and brazenly, then there are persons within the entire government machinery that must answer questions. A thorough investigation must be conducted to find out if there are other similar agencies in the Federal Capital Territory. Prince Adeniyi's boldness is so shocking. He should have his day in court. He should be allowed to say all that he knows, and no attempt whatsoever should be made to intimidate him. It is wrong, as the police reportedly did yesterday, to arrest Adeniyi's father in lieu. Policemen allegedly stormed his parents' home in Ogbomosho and arrested his father and a family friend. It is illegal to do so. Criminal liability is personal. It is not transferable in the light of Section 7 of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA), 2015. The Nigerian Police not knowing this is scandalous.



It is important that policies are not enacted or revised simply to satisfy the personal fancy or the whims of anyone no matter how highly placed.



quality, the vest and the boots too, but these days, the uniform is so poorly made, its cheapness is unmistakable.

The orientation camp for the NYSC, we are told, will be extended from four to six weeks, and the deployment will be restructured based on choices and processes during the camp, as the new NYSC will offer 11 specialized streams ranging from agriculture, education, technology and digital, healthcare, infrastructure, public service, legal, paramilitary and the security, the economy to enterprise. Corps members will be required to choose any of these streams where within six weeks they can be trained in entrepreneurial skills and prepared for the job market. We are missing the point. The NYSC orientation camp is not a training school. It is meant to be an experience. If the plan is to teach entrepreneurship, that should have been done at the university level. It is the college curriculum that needs to be reviewed, and entrepreneurship built into the various disciplines in order to ensure a proper alignment between scholarship and the labour market, for a purposeful school to work transition. In its original design, the NYSC was meant to provide para-military training, and inculcate the values of discipline and service. Indeed, there is nothing new about the six-week proposal. During the 1990/91 batch, corps members spent six weeks in camp, and were even taught how to handle small arms and light weapons. But the military government soon abandoned the idea out of fear that the state

News

CAERSE-MOUAU Conference Pushes Smart Agriculture, AI for Food Security

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru

Stakeholders at the **Second International Conference of the College of Agricultural Economics, Rural Sociology and Extension (CAERSE)** of the Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUUA), have called for the adoption of smart agricultural technologies, responsible artificial intelligence (AI) and stronger research partnerships to transform Nigeria's agricultural sector and achieve sustainable food security.

The two-day conference, held recently at the Centre for Entrepreneurship Development (CED), Umudike, Abia State, was themed "Smart Agricultural Production, Green Growth and Sustainable Development in Nigeria." It attracted academics, researchers, policymakers, extension experts and industry stakeholders from within and outside Nigeria.

Declaring the conference open, the Vice-Chancellor of MOUUA, Prof. Ursula Ngozi Akanwa, urged researchers and stakeholders to move beyond theoretical discussions by translating innovative ideas into practical solutions capable of improving agricultural productivity and environmental sustainability.



A cross section of Speakers and participants during the recently concluded second International Conference of CAERSE – MOUUA held at Umudike, Abia State.

Represented by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Prof. Nneoma Elechi Obasi, the Vice-Chancellor described the conference theme as timely, noting that Nigeria must balance increased food production with environmental conservation and climate resilience.

Prof. Akanwa reaffirmed the university's commitment to advancing teaching, research and extension services through strategic partnerships, innovative research and capacity building to support sustainable agricultural transformation in Nigeria and across Africa.

Delivering the keynote address virtually, the Executive Director of the African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS), Prof. Nicholas Ozor, described artificial intelligence as one of the most transformative technologies capable of revolutionising agriculture, improving food security and driving sustainable development.

He, however, stressed the need for Africa to develop responsible, ethical and homegrown AI solutions that promote transparency, protect privacy, respect human rights and support environmental sustainability.

Prof. Ozor highlighted AI applications in crop yield prediction, soil management, pest and disease detection, livestock monitoring, weather forecasting, food processing, storage management and market demand forecasting, citing successful innovations already being deployed in Kenya and Uganda.

He warned that inadequate data, poor internet connectivity, unreliable electricity supply, weak research infrastructure and low digital literacy remain major barriers to AI adoption in Nigeria. He also disclosed that efforts are underway through the African Technology Policy Studies Network and partner institutions to strengthen AI capacity, promote policy development and support innovation across Africa.

He urged universities to invest more in AI education, strengthen collaboration with industry and fully implement Nigeria's National Artificial Intelligence Strategy to accelerate agricultural innovation.

Presenting the lead paper, Professor of Agribusiness Management and former

Vice-Chancellor of the Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ebonyi State, Prof. Chinedum Uzoma Nwajuba, called for a practical and inclusive approach to smart agriculture, urging researchers to develop innovations that directly address the realities facing Nigerian farmers.

Nwajuba said technologies such as artificial intelligence, climate-smart agriculture and digital farming should provide practical solutions to food insecurity rather than remain academic concepts.

He identified insecurity, inadequate infrastructure, weak extension services and inconsistent agricultural policies as major obstacles to agricultural development. He also disclosed that 12 of the 26 agriculture-related projects funded under the 2025 National Research Fund focused on AI, climate-smart agriculture and digital technologies, reflecting growing interest in smart farming research.

Speaking, the Director of Extension Services at the National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI), Umudike, Dr. Benjamin Chukwuemeka Okoye, urged researchers to build stronger partnerships with farmers, extension workers, government agencies and the private sector from the conception stage of research projects to ensure innovations address real-life agricultural challenges.

He noted that competitive research grants are increasingly prioritising collaborative, solution-driven projects with measurable impact on farmers and rural communities.

The keynote speaker, a member of the Governing Council of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, David O. Nwachukwu,

stressed the need for Nigeria to embrace innovation-driven agriculture through responsible application of artificial intelligence and digital technologies. He noted that while AI presents enormous opportunities to improve productivity, enhance decision-making and strengthen food security, its adoption must be supported by sound policies, adequate infrastructure, capacity building and stronger collaboration among researchers, government, industry and farmers. He urged universities and research institutions to champion practical, homegrown solutions that address the country's unique agricultural challenges.

Earlier, in his opening remarks, the Dean of CAERSE, Prof. Nnanna M. Agwu, described the conference as timely, saying it addresses the urgent need to achieve sustainable food production amid rapid population growth, climate change and food insecurity.

He said the conference provides a platform for researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders to explore practical solutions for increasing food production while conserving natural resources and protecting the environment.

According to him, climate change and food insecurity remain two of the greatest development challenges confronting Nigeria and the global community. He noted that recent projections indicate that about 36.2 million Nigerians could face acute food and nutrition insecurity in 2026, while the country's food inflation rate stood at 16.69 per cent in May 2026.

He explained that the Federal Ministry of Agriculture projects food demand in Nigeria to increase by more than 50 per cent by 2050, while agricultural productivity could decline significantly because of climate change unless innovative farming methods are adopted.

He therefore urged researchers, policymakers, development partners and farmers to use the conference to exchange ideas, strengthen collaboration and develop practical strategies that will advance smart agricultural production, green growth and sustainable development in Nigeria.

The conference featured technical sessions and panel discussions coordinated by the Deputy Dean of CAERSE, Dr. Blessing Ada Ahamfule, and other experts, with participants exchanging ideas on smart agriculture, artificial intelligence, climate resilience and sustainable agricultural development.

Participants unanimously called for sustained investment in science, technology and innovation as essential tools for achieving green growth, enhancing food security and promoting sustainable agricultural development in Nigeria.

IHEANYI JOHN CHUKWUEMEKA DICKSON-OKPULOR

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Umudike Umudike, Oron Area
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Abia State

FORMERLY, IHEANYI JOHN J. OKPULOR

Can Ref: _____ Your ref: _____ Date: _____

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to Warn The General Public and Prospective Intending Land Buyers/ Rentees that the Agbaraukwu land is **Not For Sale or Lease Or Rent For Farming By The Umuapaka Family.**

This Agbaraukwu land was disputed between 1991-2015 from the Customary Court of Ukwu sitting at Obelie in suit No CG(UK)22[91 and ended at the Supreme Court, Abuja in Sc/295/2005, Reported in 2016 All FWLR (pt 820) 1371.

This land dispute was between **Chief Dickson Okpolor** of Umuodeke-Umuolu and **Mr. Isaac Jite** of Umuapaka and **No Other Person From Umuolu or group.**

The Supreme Court, Abuja delivered judgement in favor of **Chief Dickson Okpolor** and to the **Detriment of the Perpetual Loser – Mr. Isaac Jite** and the Umuapaka family.

The loser Umuapaka family due to their awkward reasonability and lack of knowledge of the rules of law, has unlawfully deceived many people and has committed felony-to wit- contempt of court.

Attached, is the confirmation by the traditional ruler, **HRM Eze O.E Nwagbara** dated 3rd Nov, 2016, you are by this notice advised and warned to stay clear of the Agbaraukwu land, else you join in the **contempt of court charges** against the judgement debtors-Umuapaka family, privies, agents and servants etc.

BE WARNED

SIGNED: _____

IHEANYI J.C DICKSON-OKPULOR
For Dickson Okpolor Family

Injustice and humiliation is sin, the war against this societal scourge is a continuous war which I am a fighter and will always fight until it is defeated by standing on truth



Creative Writers Hangout

Dear Step-mother (8)

The memory of her that day he visited to tell her he was leaving for Scotland still haunted him — her forced smile, the sadness hidden inside her eyes, the way she ran around to prepare the meal, gave him her clothes to change in, replaced his bag with hers and pack her bag with her clothes and other items for him to use.

A sudden urgency rose inside him. He needed to hear her voice. Even for one minute.

Quickly, he dropped to his knees beside his travel bag and began searching through it. Clothes spilled across the floor — folded shirts, training gear, documents, and socks. His movements grew increasingly frantic until finally his fingers found what he was looking for.

A tiny folded piece of paper. He froze. Carefully unfolding it, he saw Sandra's handwriting immediately. Slightly slanted. Neat but hurried.

Her father's landline number.

For a moment, Uche simply stared at the paper while emotions tightened painfully inside his chest.

Then he stood. The hostel corridor was almost silent as he walked downstairs. Most players had already gone to sleep. Only the faint hum of heating vents and distant footsteps disturbed the quiet.

Near the reception area stood an old cream-colored landline telephone resting on a wooden desk beneath a framed academy photograph. The sort of phone that looked untouched by modern technology. Uche hesitated before lifting the receiver.

His heart pounded loudly as he dialed the international code first, then Nigeria, then Sandra father's number. Each ring stretched painfully long.

One ring, two, three.

Finally, someone answered.

"Hello?"

The voice was deep and rough. Male. Older.

Uche swallowed nervously.

"Good evening, sir, my name is Uche Obi... please, may I speak with Sandra?"

Silence.

Then the man's tone hardened instantly, "Who is this?"

"My name is Uche Obi."

The reaction came immediately. A sharp exhale. Then anger.

"So you are the boy that my daughter brought into my house?"

Uche's stomach tightened. "Sir, I only came to tell her I was travelling to Scotland."

"So why are you calling me?"

"I only wanted to..."

"You will not speak to my daughter."

The words landed like a slap. Before Uche could respond, another voice appeared in the background — a woman's voice, sharp and irritated, "Who is it?"

"He said he is Uche," the man replied bitterly.

The woman came closer to the phone.

"Listen carefully," she snapped coldly. "Sandra is not available for useless distractions. Thank your God I didn't catch you that day you came here, I would have shown you what fire does to the ear of a rat."

Uche gripped the receiver tighter.

"Please, ma... I only want to know if she is okay."

"She is fine," the woman lied harshly. "And you will stop calling this number."

In the background, Uche thought he heard movement, then something else, a muffled voice — Sandra's voice, faint, desperate, "Please..."

The line crackled suddenly. The father's voice returned, now colder than before.

"Young man, focus on taking your dirty self away from poverty and forget my daughter. Do not ever call this number again."

Then came the dead tone. The line had been cut.

Uche remained frozen beside the telephone. The receiver still pressed against his ear. For several seconds, he could not move. The empty hum on the line sounded strangely loud inside the silent hostel lobby. Slowly, he returned the receiver to its place.

The walk back to his room felt longer than before.

Outside, rain battered the windows harder now, carried by restless Scottish wind. The corridors were empty, but Uche barely noticed his surroundings anymore.

All he could hear was Sandra's faint voice before the call ended. All he could imagine was her suffering back home. Her strict father, her cruel stepmother, the loneliness and the tears she probably hid from everyone else.

When he entered his room, the warmth inside suddenly felt unbearable. He removed his hoodie slowly and sat on the bed in silence. He tossed the piece of paper containing Sandra father's number on the bed.

Thousands of miles

separated them now. For the first time since arriving in Scotland, Uche truly felt helpless.

He lay back eventually, staring into the darkness while rain tapped endlessly against the glass outside.

Sleep still would not come.

Somewhere far away in Nigeria, Sandra was awake too. And that thought hurt more than all the pain from training combined. Thousands of miles away from the cold quietness of Scotland, the night in Nigeria felt heavy and unforgiving.

* * *

Heat clung stubbornly to the air despite the late hour, and mosquitoes hovered endlessly near the dim yellow bulb hanging above the veranda. Inside the sitting room, tension exploded the moment the landline receiver slammed back into place. Sandra's father turned toward her slowly.

His face was dark with anger. "So you have the gut to give my landline to the boy?"

Sandra stood near the corner of the room trembling, her wrapper clutched tightly around herself. Tears already gathered in her eyes. "Dady, I gave it to him so he can call and tell me how he is faring."

The slap came suddenly and violently. Her head snapped sideways as she staggered against the wall.

"You are disgracing this family!" her father roared.

Before Sandra could recover, her stepmother rushed toward her with fury burning in her eyes.

"After everything we told you?" the woman shouted. "You still want to be a prostitute?"

Sandra tried to shield herself, but the blows kept coming.

The sitting room filled with shouting and crying as her father lashed her repeatedly while her stepmother hurled insults between strikes.

"Ungrateful girl!"

Sandra collapsed onto the floor eventually, curling herself tightly while trying to protect her face. Her body shook violently from pain and fear.

Still, the beating continued. By the time they finally stopped her lips were swollen and thin red marks stretched across her arms and shoulders.

"Next time," her father warned while breathing heavily, "I will send you out of this house completely."

Sandra said nothing. She simply remained on the floor long after they left, tears sliding

silently down her cheeks onto the cold cement beneath her.

That night, she cried herself to sleep without eating.

Morning arrived too quickly. The sun rose harsh and hot over the crowded streets, and by early afternoon Sandra was already back outside hawking plantain chips. A wide tray balanced carefully on her head while sweat gathered along her neck beneath the blazing heat.

"Sweet plantain chips!"

"Fresh chips!"

Her voice sounded weaker than usual.

Every step hurt.

The bruises from the previous night burned beneath her clothes, especially where the belt had struck her back. Still, she walked through narrow streets and crowded roadside markets because refusing meant more punishment at home.

Cars honked endlessly. Commercial buses shouted for passengers.

The smell of fried food, dust, petrol fumes, and open drainage filled the humid air.

Around mid-afternoon, a man stopped her near a quieter street lined with unfinished buildings and fenced compounds. He looked respectable at first glance.

Clean shirt, polished sandals and friendly smile.

"How much for everything?" he asked casually.

Sandra adjusted the tray slightly, "Two thousand naira, sir."

The man nodded thoughtfully, "I'll buy all of it. Come inside and give my children first." He pointed toward a nearby compound with a partly open gate.

Sandra hesitated. Something about the street felt too quiet.

But hunger, exhaustion, and desperation clouded her judgment.

"My children are inside watching television," the man assured gently. "You don't have to be afraid."

Slowly, Sandra followed him through the gate. The compound looked strangely empty.

No sounds of children. No television. No movement. Immediately, unease tightened inside her chest, "Sir... where are they?"

The man closed the gate behind them.

The sound of the metal latch clicking shut made Sandra's heart skip violently.

Then his expression changed. The smile disappeared.

AUTHOR of the WEEK Nick Joaquin

Nick Joaquin was a famous Filipino writer, journalist, and historian. He was born on May 4, 1917, in Manila, Philippines. His full name was Nicomedes Márquez Joaquin. He grew up in a family that valued religion, culture, and education, and these early influences later appeared in many of his writings. Joaquin became one of the most respected literary figures in the Philippines because of the way he wrote about Filipino life, history, and identity.

Although he did not finish formal schooling, Nick Joaquin educated himself by reading widely and studying on his own. He developed a strong love for literature, history, and storytelling, which helped him become a skilled writer. He wrote in English, but his works focused deeply on Filipino traditions, beliefs, and experiences. His style was unique because he mixed beautiful language with strong historical and cultural themes.

Joaquin became well known for writing novels, short stories, plays, and essays. Some of his most famous works include *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*, *Cave and Shadows*, *"May Day Eve,"* and *"The Summer Solstice."* In these works, he often explored family life, religion, love, power, and the effects of history on people's lives. His stories were admired for their depth and



for the way they reflected Philippine society.

Aside from creative writing, Nick Joaquin was also a respected journalist. He used the pen name Quijano de Manila for many of his journalistic works. As a journalist, he wrote about important people, events, and social issues in the Philippines. His articles were known for being thoughtful, detailed, and engaging, and they helped him reach a wider audience beyond literary readers.

One of the main themes in Joaquin's writing was Philippine history. He believed that to understand the present, Filipinos needed to understand their past, especially the influence of Spanish colonial rule and Catholic traditions. His essays and stories often showed how history shaped Filipino culture, values, and identity. Because of this, his work was not only literary but also educational and reflective.

Nick Joaquin received many honors for his contributions to Philippine literature. In 1976, he was named National Artist for Literature, one of the highest awards a Filipino writer can receive. This recognition showed how important his work was to the country's culture and literary heritage. He became known as one of the greatest Filipino writers of the twentieth century.

Nick Joaquin died on April 29, 2004, but his legacy remains strong. His works are still read in schools, studied by scholars, and admired by readers who want to understand Philippine history and culture. He is remembered as a writer who used his talent to tell stories about the Filipino people and

Entertainment

Being A Celebrity Is Expensive, I Spend About ₦400 Million Every Month - Davido

Nigerian Afrobeats superstar Davido Adeleke, popularly known as Davido, has opened up about the high cost of living as an international music star, revealing that he spends up to ₦400 million every month to maintain his lifestyle and meet his responsibilities.

The award-winning singer made the revelation during a recent livestream with popular streamer Davrel, where he spoke about the financial demands that come with fame and success.

According to Davido, his monthly expenses range between \$200,000 and \$300,000, which is estimated to be between ₦300 million and ₦400 million, depending on the exchange rate.

He explained that the amount covers only his personal expenses and the cost of running his day-to-day life as a celebrity. He added that the figure does not include the expenses of his wife, Chioma Adeleke, or the cost of taking care of the rest of his household.

Davido also pointed out that the monthly spending does not include the money he spends on luxury cars, expensive jewellery, designer clothing and other high-value purchases.

"I spend between \$200,000 and \$300,000 every month, and that doesn't even include my wife's expenses or the rest of my household. It also doesn't include expenses for



the purchase of luxury cars and jewellery," he said.

The singer's statement has attracted widespread attention on social media, with many Nigerians reacting to the huge amount he spends every month. While some fans expressed shock, others said the cost is understandable considering his status as one of Africa's biggest music stars.

Many supporters noted that Davido employs a large number of people, including security personnel, drivers, personal assistants, managers, band members and other staff who help manage his music career and business activities. They believe these responsibilities contribute significantly to his monthly expenses.

Davido has built a successful career over the years with several hit songs, award-winning albums and international collaborations with top artists. He has performed on some of the world's biggest stages and remains one of the most recognised African musicians globally.

IK Ogbonna Breaks Silence On Alex Ekubo's Death

Nollywood actor and filmmaker Ikechukwu Mitchel Ogbonna, popularly known as IK Ogbonna, has finally spoken publicly about the death of his close friend and fellow actor, Alex Ekubo.

Alex Ekubo died on May 12, 2026, after spending hours on life support. His family said he passed away at Evercare Hospital in Lagos following complications from advanced metastatic kidney cancer.

Throughout Ekubo's burial and funeral, IK Ogbonna remained silent, leading many to believe he was mourning privately.

The actor broke his silence with an emotional tribute shared on his Instagram page.

"On May 11, I lost my best friend and brother, Alex. Nothing prepares you for a loss like that," he wrote.

Ogbonna said the painful experience had completely changed the way he sees death, noting that many people do not truly understand the weight of losing a loved one until it happens to them.

"You never truly understand the weight of death until it's your own person inside that vehicle. Until the phone stops ringing forever. Until the chair beside you remains empty. Until the conversations you thought you had time to finish suddenly become memories," he said.

The actor revealed that he had spent the last two months trying to come to terms with the loss.

"For the past two months, I've been trying to understand life, loss, God, and why someone so full of life could

suddenly become a memory," he wrote.

Reflecting on their friendship, Ogbonna said they shared dreams of growing old together, building businesses, making movies, travelling the world and raising their families.

He said they believed they still had many years ahead of them but accepted that God had a different plan.

Despite the pain, Ogbonna said he had found comfort in his faith, believing that God's wisdom is greater than human understanding.

He described Ekubo as a man who truly lived, loved deeply, helped others and left a lasting impact on everyone around him.

According to him, the tragedy reminded him that life is fragile and that kindness, love, good character and the way people treat others are more important than wealth, fame or achievements.



Ikechukwu Mitchel Ogbonna

Foreign News

Trump Considers Expanding US Military Operations Against Iran

US President Donald Trump is considering expanding military operations against Iran as tensions between the two countries continue to rise.

According to two sources familiar with the discussions, Trump met with senior officials in the White House Situation Room on Tuesday to review options for increasing military pressure on Iran, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's busiest oil shipping routes.

Trump has publicly vowed to intensify military action against Iran in the coming days, warning that civilian infrastructure and energy facilities could become targets. Behind closed doors, he has reportedly been discussing several military options aimed at forcing Tehran to accept US demands after previous diplomatic efforts failed.

Over the past five days,

the US military has carried out daily strikes on Iranian positions near the Strait of Hormuz. One of the latest attacks reportedly targeted Greater Tunb Island, which Iran uses as a military base.

US officials said the strikes are designed to weaken Iran's ability to disrupt commercial shipping through the strategic waterway. They added that destroying

missile launchers, radar systems and other military assets could also prepare the ground for broader military operations if approved.

Among the options reportedly under consideration are an operation to seize Kharg Island, Iran's main oil export terminal, and airstrikes on underground

facilities at Pickaxe Mountain, which are believed to be linked to Iran's nuclear programme.

In recent interviews, Trump confirmed he is interested in both targets but suggested that any ground operation to capture Kharg Island could be carried out by another country.

"We have other people that will do the ground campaign for us," Trump said during an interview with Fox News, without providing further details.

Although Trump has previously threatened to escalate military action before stepping back, officials say he has become increasingly frustrated that

Iran has not changed its position on nuclear issues and continues to interfere with shipping through the Strait of Hormuz.

The president has also sent mixed signals about diplomacy. While he recently said Iran was eager to negotiate, he had earlier dismissed further talks as "a waste of time."



US President Donald Trump

Scientists Say 400-Year-Old Medici Family Mystery Was Likely Caused by Malaria, Not Murder

A mystery surrounding the deaths of two members of Italy's powerful Medici family more than 400 years ago may finally have been solved.

Scientists now believe that Grand Duke Francesco I de' Medici and his wife, Bianca Cappello, died of malaria rather than arsenic poisoning, putting to rest one of history's longest-running murder theories.

The couple died in 1587 within hours of each other after suffering several days of severe illness. They reportedly experienced symptoms associated with malaria, including recurring fever. However, suspicions quickly arose that Francesco's younger brother, Ferdinando, had poisoned them with arsenic to claim the throne.

At the time, Ferdinando stood to inherit power but risked losing the opportunity if Francesco's illegitimate son, Antonio, was chosen instead. The fact that Ferdinando had visited the couple shortly before they became ill fueled speculation that he was behind their deaths.

Francesco and Bianca fell ill at a Medici villa in Poggio a Caiano, near Florence, an area that was once surrounded by marshes and rice fields, making it a suitable environment for mosquitoes that spread malaria. Despite this, murder rumours persisted for centuries, partly because of the Medici family's long history of political violence and assassination plots.

Since 2004, researchers studying the Medici family tombs have found evidence suggesting malaria caused Francesco's death. However, other studies, including one published in 2006, argued that the couple died from arsenic poisoning.

Now, a new study by researchers from the University of Pisa in Italy and Yale University analysed DNA extracted from the skeletal remains of Francesco and his brother Giovanni. The findings strongly support the conclusion that malaria, not murder, was responsible for the deaths, offering what may be the final answer to a mystery that has lasted for more than four centuries.

Sporting Ambassador



Abia Volleyball Team Back In Premier League after 23-Years

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Abia State Government says its volleyball team has returned to the Nigeria Volleyball Premier League after 23 years of relegation, describing the achievement as a milestone in its drive to revive sports development phase of the competition scheduled for the coming months.

He said the achievement underscores the Otti led administration's commitment to repositioning sports, nurturing young talents and creating opportunities for development football talents.



Prince Okey Kanu

across the state.

The Commissioner for Information, Prince Okey Kanu, disclosed this at Government House Umuahia, on Monday while briefing Journalists on the outcome of this week's State Executive Council Meeting presided over by Governor Alex Otti.

Prince Kanu said the team earned promotion after an impressive outing in the first phase of the Nigeria Volleyball Premier League held in Abuja and is now preparing for the second

athletes to excel.

"Abia State Volleyball Team is currently participating in the Nigeria Volleyball Premier League after 23 years of relegation.

"Team Abia performed outstandingly well in the just-covered phase one of the Premier League

Competition held in Abuja.

"They are currently preparing for the second phase that is scheduled to be held in a few months' time", Prince Kanu said.

He added that the

history.

He said the club was currently undergoing restructuring to strengthen its competitiveness ahead of the 2026/2027 Nigeria Women's Football League season.

"Abia Angels football club, the state's premier female football club has qualified for the Super Six.

"This is the first time in the history of the team to qualify for the Super Six. This is a huge plus for the state's female football team. The team is being restructured for even better performance in

According to him, six outstanding players identified during the tournament have already been scouted for professional football careers through the academy's foreign partners and are expected to join clubs in Europe.

The commissioner also announced that Abia Angels Football Club had qualified for the Nigeria Women's Football League Super Six for the first time in the club's



File

Abia Hosts Rainforest Basketball League

By Joseph Jacob

Abia Emerging as Nigeria's New Basketball Hub, Successfully Hosts Rainforest Basketball League

Abia State is steadily establishing itself as one of Nigeria's emerging centres of basketball development following the inauguration of the current board of the Abia State Basketball Association, led by its Chairman, Mr Victor Ifeanyi Okoro. Through strategic grassroots programmes, talent development initiatives and the successful hosting of major competitions, the state has continued to attract national attention as a growing destination for the sport.

The latest testament to this progress was the successful hosting of the Rainforest Basketball League, which brought together 11 teams from the South-East and South-South geopolitical zones to compete for honours. The tournament provided an opportunity for young basketball talents to showcase their abilities while fostering regional unity and healthy competition.

Declaring the competition open, the Honourable Commissioner for Youth and Sports Development, Sir Nwaobilor Nwadinma Ananaba, reaffirmed the commitment of the Abia State Government, under the leadership of Governor Dr Alex Otti, to creating opportunities for young people to discover, nurture and maximise their sporting talents. He stressed that sports remain a powerful tool for youth empowerment, job creation and social development.

The Commissioner recalled the inspiring journey of Abia-born basketball star Ugonna Onyenso, who began his basketball career on the same Umuahia court that hosted the league before progressing to international prominence and earning opportunities in the United States. He urged the players to remain focused on their dreams, noting that dedication, discipline, consistency and hard work could open doors to greater achievements both within and outside Nigeria.

Sir Ananaba also encouraged all participating teams to compete with the spirit of sportsmanship, mutual respect and camaraderie, reminding them that while winning was important, building friendships and displaying exemplary conduct were

equally valuable.

The players responded positively to the Commissioner's charge, producing thrilling and fiercely contested matches throughout the opening phase of the competition.

In the opening game, Akwa Ibom edged hosts Abia State 72-67 in an entertaining encounter, while Ebonyi defeated Imo State 55-46 in the second fixture. Cross River produced a dominant performance to overpower Enugu 77-27 before Rivers rounded off the day's action with a convincing 62-49 victory over Edo State.

Abia bounced back impressively on the second day, defeating Enugu 60-42 to revive their campaign. Ebonyi continued their fine form by recording a second consecutive victory, edging Edo State 62-58. Rivers maintained their perfect start with a hard-fought 76-70 win over Akwa Ibom, while Cross River defeated Imo State 57-41 to remain among the frontrunners.

Matchday Three produced more exciting contests as Rivers overwhelmed Enugu 56-18 to preserve their unbeaten record. Cross River continued their impressive run with a narrow 63-61 victory over Ebonyi in one of the most entertaining games of the tournament. Akwa Ibom also returned to winning ways with a 68-63 triumph over Edo State, while Imo defeated hosts Abia State 54-34.

The competition showcased the growing standard of basketball across the two regions and further reinforced Abia State's reputation as a capable host of major sporting events.

The league will continue with Phase Two in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, in September, where teams will battle for qualification and overall honours.

Hosting the Rainforest Basketball League came on the heels of the successful staging of the Abia State 3x3 Open Basketball Championship, another landmark event organised by the Abia State Basketball Association. Together, both competitions underline the association's determination to revive basketball in the state, provide regular competition for athletes and position Abia as a leading destination for basketball development in Nigeria.



File

Abians Shine as Nigeria Triumph at Uganda Para-Badminton International

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru
& Joseph Jacob

Team Nigeria delivered a dominant performance at the 2026 Uganda Para-Badminton International, winning six of the tournament's 10 titles. Abia State athletes spearheaded the country's remarkable success, accounting for 12 of Team Nigeria's 14 medals.

Chukwuemeka Ijeoma Gift of Abia State won gold in the WH2 Women's Singles before teaming up with Lyka Brown, who also claimed gold in the WH1 Women's Singles, to secure another gold medal in the WH1-WH2 Women's Doubles.

In the men's wheelchair events, Abia State's Emmanuel Ifeanacho Ohaeri clinched gold in the WH2 Men's Singles and partnered Lyka Brown to win gold in the WH1-WH2 Mixed Doubles.

In the WH1-WH2 Men's Doubles, the Abia State pair of Emmanuel Ifeanacho Ohaeri and Ekeoma Samuel finished with silver medals. Samuel also claimed silver in the WH1 Men's Singles and teamed up with Chukwuemeka Ijeoma Gift to earn another silver in the WH1-WH2 Mixed Doubles.

Abia State's Obinna Precious Nwosu captured gold in the SL3 Men's Singles after defeating fellow Abian Chukwuebuka



The Hon. Commissioner for Sports and Youth Development, Sir Ananaba (4th right of back row) flanked by the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Sports, Pastor Jane Igwe and the General Manager Abia Newspapers and Publishing Corporation, Hon. Jones Nnanna Ike with the victorious athletes and their officials

Sunday Eze, who settled for silver.

Another Abia athlete, Chigozie Jeremiah Nnanna, won gold in the SL4 Men's Singles before partnering Chukwuebuka Sunday Eze to claim gold in the SL3-SU5 Men's Doubles.

In the SU5 category, Abia State's Elijah Enejo Agada won gold in the Men's Singles and teamed up with Obinna Precious

Nwosu to secure silver in the SL3-SU5 Men's Doubles.

Host nation Uganda finished second on the medals table with three gold medals, while the Republic of Benin placed third with one gold medal.

While welcoming the victorious athletes back to the

state, Abia State Commissioner for Sports and Youth Development, Sir Nwaobilor Nwadinma Ananaba, described the team's achievement as another milestone in the growth of para-sports in Abia State and applauded them for bringing honour to both the state and Nigeria on the international stage.

The commissioner attributed the team's success to the Governor's unwavering commitment to youth development, sports excellence and the promotion of inclusiveness for persons with disabilities, stressing that Abia has continued to distinguish itself as one of the fastest-growing centres for World Para-Badminton in Africa.

He reaffirmed the ministry's commitment to sustaining the state's momentum in sports development and announced plans to host the 2nd Abia Para-Badminton International Championship next year, with the competition expected to attract athletes from across Africa and other parts of the world.

Hon. Nwaobilor concluded by appreciating the athletes, coaches, officials and other stakeholders whose dedication and sacrifices have continued to earn Abia State International recognition and strengthen its reputation as a hub for para-badminton excellence.

Also present at the reception was the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Sports and Youth Development, Pastor Jane Igwe, as well as the General Manager, Abia State Newspapers and Publishing Corporation Umuahia, Hon. Jones Nnanna Ike, who congratulated the athletes and officials for their exceptional performances and commitment to excellence.

SUDOKU

Puzzle By: Prince Blessing Lazarus

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All you have to do is fill the grid in such away that every 3X3 box and row and column, contains the numbers 1-9.



Nigerian athletes showcasing their medals